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ABSTRACT

This learning pack, which was developed in Britain primarily for use with small groups of older adults who have had little formal education, contains nine self-contained units of learning activities dealing with topics related to older adults' everyday lives. The following topics are covered: techniques for organizing and running a group; myths about aging; creative writing; listening skills; sources of information about social services and welfare rights in specific localities; exploration of local, national, or international issues and ways of influencing policymaking; health and well-being, the National Health Service, and ways of staying healthy; reading for pleasure; reminiscence; and basic mathematics (learning to be critical about accepting figures at face value, using a calculator, and calculating percentages and fractions). Each unit contains some or all of the following: guidance for group leaders, one or more warm-up activities, learning activities and suggestions for conducting the learning session, a list of recommended resources, information to be presented during the session, student handouts, and student feedback sheets. Lists of 21 addresses and 3 directories are included. (MN)

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'IT'S NEVER TOO LATE'

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A Learning Pack for older people with few or no formal qualifications

AGE WELL

Produced by
Ruskin College,
Oxford City Council Recreation Services,
Headington Community Education

£5.00

Supported by Charity Projects

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NEVER TOO LATE

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INTRODUCTION

ORIGINS OF THE PACK

This pack grew out of a community centre based project, in Oxford, involving older learners. The participants' ages ranged from the 60s through to the 90s. They had all left school at the earliest possible age and none had participated since then in any formal educational activities. A tutor worked with a group of fifteen for 6 months and in that time covered most of the range of topics included here.

Since then a team of people from various groups and organisations, including older learners themselves, further developed the materials for wider use. We hope you find them useful, stimulating and interesting.

WHO IS THE PACK FOR?

The pack is intended for small groups of people who want to put together a varied programme of activities for themselves. The audience we had in mind are the over 60s but there is no reason why the pack should not be used by adults of any age. Groups might include members of retirement groups, visitors to day centres and people living in institutions. They might also include new groups established around community centres, colleges and schools. Our aim has been to write materials that are flexible, easy to use and varied.

THE AIMS OF THE PACK

The aims of the pack are to provide an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience for participants; one that involves active participation and thereby develops confidence. The pack is written for non-professionals and does not require group leaders or participants to have any special knowledge or training.

HOW TO USE THE PACK

The pack is divided into self-contained topic areas. Each topic area offers a range of material that includes **Warm-Ups, Activities,** and **Extracts**, and some ideas about how they might be used. There is no particular order in which you should approach the topic areas. This will be up to you and your group, as will how much or how little you use the material on offer within each topic area.

1

RUNNING A GROUP

INTRODUCTION

Groups can come together in a variety of ways. Some can be quite informal, made up of friends and acquaintances who want to share activities together. Others can grow out of already existing organisations or larger groups. Some can be more formally organised, for instance by an adult education centre, family centre or community centre.

It is useful to have an idea about how groups work and what you can do to ensure that they work well. This section introduces you to ideas and suggestions along these lines.

WHAT IS A GROUP?

Groups come in all shapes and sizes but essentially they have a shared purpose and usually an agreed means of achieving it. Of course there is often disagreement so groups usually develop formal and informal 'rules' about running themselves and making decisions.

Learning groups are best kept quite small but not too small. You need enough people to get a good discussion going, but not so many that the group is difficult to manage and people don't get much chance to speak. Between six to twelve is probably a good size.

GETTING A GROUP TOGETHER

This might involve putting a suggestion to a meeting of your organisation, putting a poster up at the local community centre, advertising in a free newspaper *What's On?* page or on local radio, or starting with a small group of friends. It would be useful to get help from a local community education tutor, recreation department officer, family centre worker or the social services department.

ROLE OF GROUP LEADER

The pack has been written for non-professionals. There is no expectation that group leaders will have any special knowledge. What they need to be prepared to do is help to organise the group and work through some of the materials with participants. The group itself will therefore need to take quite a lot of responsibility for making the sessions work well. This needs to be made clear in the publicity and in the first session.

Group leaders are:

- willing to coordinate the group
- willing to lead a programme put together by the group
- likely to delegate tasks to group members, e.g. booking speakers, finding out information, chairing sessions

Group leaders are not:

- experts
- professionals
- different from members of the group
- responsible for making everything go well

1 SOME PRE-COURSE CONSIDERATIONS

Time and place

Think carefully about which time of day you should hold the group. Older people are usually unhappy about evening meetings, so day-time is probably better. If people are likely to come on the bus find out when bus passes are in operation.

Consider the best day of the week. Choose a day that does not clash with other activities such as clubs or the market.

Select the venue carefully. It may be possible to hold your group in a centre the participants already use. A family centre, community centre or local school might be ideal. Many older people find lack of transport a serious problem, so local venues are probably better.

Arrangements

Choose a room for the group that is easily accessible, with preferably no stairs, and which is warm and as attractive as possible. You will probably want tea/coffee making facilities so that you can have a break or start the session with a drink.

You will need comfortable chairs - possibly of different designs to meet a range of different needs. You will probably want tables for some of the activities. Make sure you also have something to collect your ideas on, for instance a flip-chart, a portable whiteboard or even large sheets of paper (e.g. plain wallpaper) that can be stuck to the wall.

Make a list of the requirements that your group will have and use this when making decisions about premises.

Forming goals

Before you get your group together you need to have a clear idea about what your goals are. For instance, what are you wanting to achieve, what do you hope you and others will get out of it? You will need to talk to people about this, such as those you are consulting for support, and the members of the group you plan to work with, if they are already established as a group.

You may, for instance, produce a list like the following.

We would like to:

Share and exchange ideas in a friendly and tolerant setting

Try out new activities

Become more confident

Participate fully in deciding what to include in a programme

Participate fully in group sessions

Become more supportive of each other

Have fun

Make new friends

When you have decided on your goals you are in a better position to decide how to achieve them. Your ideas might include:

- ☐ devising ways in which all the group members will become involved in activities, e.g. through working in small groups or pairs, taking turns in offering ideas or experiences
- ☐ ensuring that there is plenty of time for members of the group to chat informally to each other and meet new people - perhaps while having tea
- ☐ sharing thoughts about the goals for the group and collecting people's ideas
- ☐ helping the group to shape some guidelines for the way in which sessions will be conducted

2 THINKING ABOUT LEARNING METHODS

There are many different methods that your group can use in order to get the best out of the materials. Some members of the group might be unfamiliar with them, so it would be worth talking about these different ideas with them.

Some people think of learning in the formal sense of what they did at school. Others may well be acquainted with listening to speakers and perhaps asking questions, but not with getting more fully involved.

Adult learning best takes place when:

- people study and discuss what they are interested in
- when group members are relaxed and supportive of each other
- people participate fully in the group
- people learn to listen to each other and hear about each other's different ideas and experiences

You might like to highlight these issues with your group using the sheet *What Learning Is About* (p.11).

Different methods

Different methods that the group could use include:

☐ agreeing to sit in different seats each week so people get to know each other

☐ discussing issues in pairs or small groups and then feeding ideas back to the larger group

☐ doing some activities individually and then discussing in a pair

☐ inviting a speaker and discussing what you are going to ask them before they come

☐ letting one of the group introduce a topic followed by questions and a discussion

☐ each person having a two minute 'say' about something

☐ watching a video with some questions in mind to discuss afterwards (someone needs to watch it first and suggest some questions)

☐ acting out situations as if they were for real (role play), e.g. what you want to say to the doctor

3 THE ROLE OF GROUP LEADER

Your role as group leader is:

- to coordinate activities
- to make sure that the ground-rules are reasonably observed
- to keep people on the subject
- to keep an eye on the time
- to plan the sessions - but delegate as much as possible

You should probably try to avoid:

- doing too much of the talking
- feeling you have to be very knowledgeable about something
- commenting very much on other people's views
- feeling that you have to have all the answers

4 DURING THE COURSE

The first session
First sessions of groups are always the hardest. Participants feel nervous and so do group leaders.

It is important to be welcoming when people arrive especially if people do not know each other well. Greet each person when they come in, introduce yourself, show them where to go and find someone for them to talk to. Cups of tea are often a good ice-breaker.

Use the first session to get to know each other better, to develop group guidelines and to plan a programme that everyone is happy with.

Introductions

Make sure people have introduced themselves to each other and have begun to get to know each other's names. Sometimes groups like to wear sticky labels with their names on.

Check practical arrangements such as where the lavatories are, what time you want to have a break, who is being picked up after the session, etc.

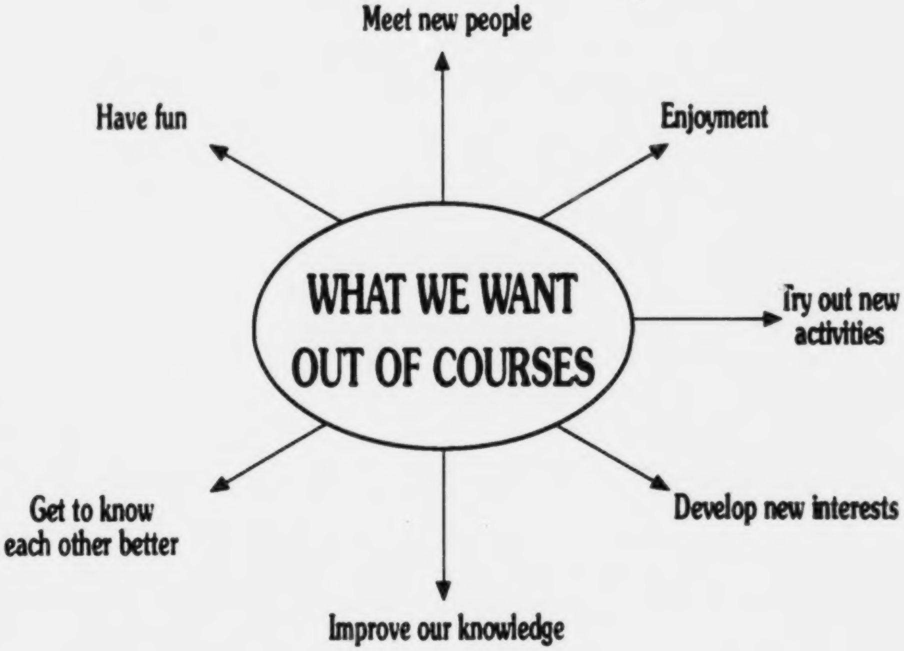
Warming up

An old favourite is to ask people to talk to one other person whom they don't know. Let them have ten minutes for talking and then ask them to introduce each other saying only one or two (approved !) things about the other person.

Group goals

Discuss with members of the group what they would like to get out of the course. You could, for instance, ask each in turn to briefly give their views. Or you could begin by telling them what your aims have been in setting up the course and using this as a basis for discussion.

You might like to present your collective ideas like this:



Developing guidelines for discussion

It is very useful to develop group guidelines. It means that the whole group has decided how it wants to run and it makes your task as coordinator much easier. Any 'difficult customers' can be reminded by the group that there are rules that they should stick to.

Explain to the group what you want them to do and why. Offer them the **Model Guidelines**. Then ask them in pairs to think of the sorts of points they would like to include in their own. Write these on a board and discuss which to keep or reject.

Model Guidelines

These guidelines are to give you some ideas when you are devising your own. It is very important for groups to have guidelines as it makes sessions run much more smoothly and allows everyone to feel more involved.

- Try to be punctual. The group will start on time - but it doesn't matter if you are late.
- Don't talk for too long. Make sure everyone gets a chance.
- Welcome anyone who is new.
- Listen when someone is talking.
- Address your comments to the whole group, not just the coordinator.
- Be tolerant of different views.
- Try and make sure everyone feels included.
- Know that what you say will be listened to in confidence.
- Avoid language that offends, e.g. swearing, racist language, sexisms, ageisms, etc.
- Feel free to say what you think about the sessions and suggest new ideas.
- Support the coordinator by sticking to the guidelines and taking responsibility for the programme.

Make sure someone copies these ideas down for photocopying. Alternatively, ask everyone to copy them down.

Putting a programme together

Introduce the pack and its contents. Give the group some idea of the sorts of things that could be covered. You will need to decide what to cover in the next two or three sessions but it may be possible to leave decisions about further weeks for later. Consider if there is anything you could all do/find out in between sessions.

As far as possible the Warm-Ups, Activities and Extracts have been arranged so that they can be photocopied as separate sheets which people write on and take home if they wish. At the end of each session decide what material will need to be photocopied for the next session and who will be responsible for this. You may need to make a small charge for photocopying expenses, either per session or at the start of the course.

Ideally each participant should have a copy of this book, but where this is not possible you may need to photocopy relevant extracts, and of course it will be harder work for the chairperson!

Get going!
It is a good idea in a first session to actually get on with one of the Activities in the pack. Try one of the Warm-Up ideas (p.28).

Finishing
At the end, ask everyone in turn to say how they felt about the first session and what improvements they can suggest.

5 FUTURE SESSIONS

☐ Suggest that participants sit in different seats.

☐ Try rearranging the furniture - some weeks you could sit in a circle, others around separate tables - experiment !

☐ Encourage people to take responsibility for the group - remind them that it is their group rather than yours. For instance, someone else might book the speaker, buy the milk, type up the programme, send off for information.

☐ Continue to encourage positive comments about how to improve the sessions.

6 AFTER EACH SESSION

☐ Congratulate yourself!

☐ Follow up people who didn't come with a friendly note or phone call - try and delegate this.

☐ Make an action list of things you will need to do before next time and when you are going to do them.

ABOVE ALL, HAVE A GOOD TIME! LEARNING SHOULD BE ENJOYABLE AND REWARDING.

GOOD LUCK
We would love to hear how you get on.

What Learning Is About

- ✔ Being open to new ideas
- ✔ Questioning your old ideas and assumptions
- ✔ Developing new skills
- ✔ Accepting a challenge
- ✔ Giving new activities a chance
- ✔ Being willing to share some of your ideas and experiences with others
- ✔ Listening
- ✔ Not giving up if something is difficult
- ✔ Looking for the evidence; being critical; digging below the surface

What Learning Is Not About

- ✗ Being closed to new ideas
- ✗ Doing only the things you have done before
- ✗ Giving up, if it seems difficult
- ✗ Saying 'I can't' before you have tried
- ✗ Relying only on personal experience
- ✗ Not listening to others
- ✗ Knowing you are right
- ✗ Believing there is only one view of things
- ✗ Not being willing to listen and discuss

2

MYTHS ABOUT AGEING

This section aims to challenge some of the ideas and myths about ageing that can diminish people's lives. The effect of such ideas can be to make people think they shouldn't be doing certain things at certain ages or can't try new activities. Ageing is as varied an experience as being young and can be very different for different groups. Being older on a low income offers fewer opportunities than being older on a high income, for instance. Ageing in a country different from the one in which you were born may raise special issues. Older people should be seen as individuals deserving of respect and inclusion in society.

Guidance for Group Leaders

WARM-UP

☐ Give the group the sheet entitled *Opinions on Ageing* (p.15). Ask them to put a tick by the statements they agree with and a cross by those they don't. If they have no opinion, leave it blank.

☐ In turn ask people to briefly explain one statement they agreed with and one they disagreed with.

ACTIVITIES AND SUGGESTED SESSION

There are six Activities of varying lengths for use in this session, or they could be used over two sessions if there is a particular interest in this subject.

Activity 1 **Myths About Ageing**

☐ Give out the quiz entitled *Myths About Ageing.*

☐ Ask people to individually tick or cross those statements they agree or disagree with. They may prefer to do neither and add a comment instead. Encourage them to discuss the statements with a neighbour but make their own decisions.

☐ In the main group, ask people for their responses. You could try asking each person to comment on one question. Allow a brief amount of time for discussion, but then move on.

☐ When you have finished this, which might take *thirty minutes*, hand out the *Comments* sheets (pp. 16-18). Explain before you do so that the comments are not necessarily 'cut and dried', 'yes' or 'no' type, answers. People may not necessarily agree with them or the way they are presented. That is fine. You are looking at complex and controversial issues.

☐ Split the large group into smaller groups. Ask each group to read through the comments together and to note their reactions to them - are they surprised, pleased or interested, or doubtful, sceptical, etc.?

☐ Ask one person from each group to briefly feed back their group's responses, to the main group.

TAKE A TEA BREAK?

After the break choose a couple of other Activities to cover. You might try, for instance:

Activity 2 **What's in a Name**?

Activity 3 **Growing Old Away From Your Country of Birth**

Activity 4 **Images of Ageing**

Activity 5 **Caring for the Elderly**

Activity 6 **Poem**

☐ Finish the session by reading out the poem *Kate* (p. 25). Ask for general reactions or use the questions included.

FOLLOW-UP

You could give the group one of the Extracts for them to think about during the week for discussion at the next meeting.

Some might like to monitor how older people are presented in the media and describe their findings.

CONCLUSIONS

Ask each person in turn one of the following:

- What is the most surprising thing you have learnt today?
- Which part of the session have you found the most interesting?

RESOURCES

Janet Ford and Ruth Sinclair, *Sixty Years On - Women Talk About Old Age*, Women's Press, 1987.

Eric Midwinter, *The British Gas Survey on Attitudes to Ageing*, Centre for Policy Studies, 1991.

Ellen Newton, *This Bed My Centre*, Virago, 1980.

Alison Norman, *Triple Jeopardy - Growing Old in a Second Homeland*, Centre for Policy on Ageing, 1987.

Mary Stott, *Ageing For Beginners*, Blackwell, 1981.

Mary Riley

Warm-Up

Opinions on ageing: what do *you* think?

You're only as old as you feel

It's never too late to learn

Being younger has as many problems as being older

You're bound to go downhill after 60

More older people in the population is a big problem

Older people want to keep their independence

Retiring from work is easier for women than for men

Too many older people live in poverty

You can't make generalisations about older people - they're all different

Retirement is a liberation

Activities

Activity 1 Myths About Ageing

Mary Riley

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1 Older people are generally in poor health.

2 Most older people are on a low income.

3 A large number of older people end up in institutional care.

4 Families no longer look after older people like they used to.

5 Retired people do not make much of a contribution to society.

6 Intelligence does not necessarily decline as you get older.

7 Dementia (senility) is common in people over 60.

8 Older people generally enjoy life.

9 Older people are less likely to be victims of crime than any other group.

10 Older people often enjoy an active sex life.

MYTHS ABOUT AGEING: COMMENT

1 Older people are generally in poor health

This is not so. The majority of older people are well and live reasonably happy lives. In a recent survey (Midwinter 1991) 78 per cent of the interviewees who were aged 55 and over reported being in very good or fairly good health; 75 per cent of interviewees over 75 reported the same. Poor health is not an inevitable prospect of decline as you get older. Good health however is related to income levels with those on higher incomes experiencing better health and living longer.

2 Most older people are on a low income

Most older people are not on a low income. In 1990 the top 20 per cent of retired households had an average income of £10,000; 85 per cent had an extra income on top of a state pension though often this was very small.

However, many relied solely on a state pension: 30 per cent of people of retirement age had only a state pension. Two million claimed Income Support and one million in addition were entitled but did not claim. Many in this group reported difficulties in paying bills, buying basics, keeping warm in winter.

Your standard of living post-retirement depends very much on your standard of living before retirement. Women, therefore, and particularly working-class women end up or indeed continue living in poverty.

3 A large number of older people end up in institutional care

This is not the case. Only about 5 per cent of the retired population live in long-term residential accommodation. Of over 75s, 80 per cent live in the community. Most older people therefore live at home. Of people over 65, 20 per cent of men and 47 per cent of women live alone.

4 Families no longer look after older people like they used to

Not so. As we have seen, few older people live in long-term institutional care. Most older people who need support get it from their families. This care is vastly more than that which statutory services provide. Most carers are women and they save the state £15-£24 billion a year (*Guardian*, 25 September 1990).

Compared with the past, there are more older people needing care and relatively fewer young people to look after them. Although people are more likely now to live at a distance from each other changes in technology such as the telephone and car mean that contacts can be maintained.

The Griffiths Report on Community Care (1989) recommends greater support for carers but this needs financial input.

Families do care for older people but the burdens of doing so can be immense.

5 Retired people do not make much of a contribution to society

Not so. Older people have, of course, already made a major contribution to society through work and caring for family. So perhaps the question we should really ask is - does society contribute adequately to older people's needs?

Many retired people continue to work part-time though one survey (Midwinter 1991) found that 74 per cent had no desire to continue working.

People aged 65-74 are the group most likely to be involved in voluntary work. Many older people continue to work as carers.

6 Intelligence does not necessarily decline as you get older

This is true. How intelligent you are depends more on whether you use your mind or not rather than on ageing. Open University students over 60 gain better marks for their essays than do younger students. People's most productive years are often their older years - witness Picasso, Mandela, or Beethoven. Maturity, experience, opportunity are all important aspects affecting intelligence.

It may be that memory deteriorates to some extent. However, when an older person forgets something it is more likely to be put down to ageing than if a younger person does because of the stereotype. Remembering items like telephone numbers is, anyway, not a very good test of mental powers. Adults are more concerned about understanding things than learning by rote.

7 Dementia is common in people over 60

Not so. The highest published figure is 10 per cent and other research puts the figure even lower (Freer 1988). There are probably cases of misdiagnosis when people are becoming forgetful or alcoholism becomes a problem.

8 Older people generally enjoy life

Yes, they do. Midwinter's study (1991) found that 27 per cent enjoy life more and 42 per cent about the same compared with when they were younger. There is a relationship between enjoying life less, your health and being on a low income.

9 Older people are less likely to be victims of crimes of violence than any other group

This is generally true. Young working-class men are most likely to be victims. However, older people are more fearful of crime. This may be because the media promotes such fears and politicians sometimes play on them. In the age of the motor car, deserted and poorly-lit streets may deter many older people from venturing out in the evenings. Property crimes against older people are much more common than crimes of violence.

10 Older people often enjoy an active sex life

This is true. Younger people do not have a monopoly of sexual activity! Stereotypes can get in the way of people enjoying sex in later life. Younger people often do not like the idea of older people having a sex life but perhaps that is their problem!

REFERENCES

Professor Anderson (1983), 'Family Life Not So Good in the Old Days After All', *Guardian*, 15 September 1983.

Charles Freer (1988), 'The Ageing Population: Burden?', in Nicholas Wells and Charles Freer, *The Ageing Population: Burden or Challenge?*

Eric Midwinter (1991), *The British Gas Survey on Attitudes to Ageing.*

Eric Midwinter (1992), *Age is Opportunity: Education and Older People*, Centre for Policy Studies.

Chris Phillipson (1982), *Capitalism and the Construction of Old Age*, Macmillan.

UDACE (1988), *Learning Later: A Handbook For Developing Education Opportunities With Older People.*

'Who Cares about Women...and their Carers?', *Guardian*, 25 September 1990.

Activity 2 **What's in a Name?**

Society uses various names to denote elderly people. Which ones do you prefer and why?

SENIOR CITIZENS
THE OLD
OLD 'UNS
OLD CHAP
ELDERLY
ELDERS
GERIATRICS
RETIRED
OLD WOMAN
OLDER PEOPLE
OLD MAN
PENSIONERS
ELDERLY PEOPLE
OAPs

...NONE OF THESE

ANOTHER APPROACH TO NAMING

Increasingly people are using the idea of **stages in the life-cycle** to describe people. The idea of **four ages** is becoming more common.

First age	-	Childhood
Second age	-	The age of paid work and family raising
Third age	-	The age of active independent life beyond child-rearing and work - this can be as long as thirty years
Fourth age	-	The age of eventual dependence - often very short

What do you think of this idea? Does it have advantages?

Activity 3 Growing Old Away From Your Country of Birth

Many people in Britain today are growing older in a country very different from the one in which they spent their youth. There is often a sense of loss - the loss of family ties, of community and of respect for the older person. The following are some comments made by West Indian people in a survey carried out by All Faiths of One Race in 1981.*

> *Back home, family will look after you when you are old, but here they are too busy because they all go out to work.*

> *I didn't know about 'pensioners' till I came here...we don't call people old. We don't throw people on the scrap heap.*

> *In England, when you reach 60 or 65, you become a social problem. No one cares about you...if you are ill, that makes it worse. In the West Indies you don't finish at 60 or 65 - you are respected. The older you are, the more respected you are.*

> *When I was in the West Indies, people would assist you and not look for pay, but here you have to depend on the DHSS and the social services for any assistance.*

DISCUSSION

You might like to split into smaller groups for this.

☐ How far do you agree that in some societies there is greater respect for older people than in others? (You may want here to refer to the article about the elderly in India, *Reverence fades as winds of change come from West* (p. 22)).

☐ Do you think that older people in Britain suffer from a lack of respect?

☐ Some people suggest that the reason for the greater respect given to elderly people in some societies is due to their accumulated wisdom gained in a society where change is slow. In many societies, including Western ones, change is very rapid, people's experiences and skills fall out of date. Do you think that this will affect how older people are treated in countries that are fast becoming industrialised such as India, Pakistan and the West Indies?

---

* Anil Bhalla and Ken Blackmore, 'Elders of the Ethnic Minority Groups, Birmingham, 1981', in Alison Norman, *Triple Jeopardy - Growing Old in a Second Homeland*, Centre for Policy Studies on Ageing, 1985.

- ☐ Would you contemplate spending your retirement in a foreign country?
- ☐ In what ways might older people be shown that they are valued? Does this differ from how younger people should be treated?

Reverence fades as wind of change comes from West

India

Ajoy Bose in New Delhi

India's rising population of the old faces many problems as traditional reverence for the elderly fades in the face of the new westernised urban values.

The country's aged population has been burgeoning over the past few decades. In 1971, 33 million were above 60 years of age, today there are 55 million and by the turn of the century there may be as many as 76 million in the over-60s bracket.

Improved personal hygiene and the spread of medical services particularly the increasing use of life-saving drugs are the main reasons for people living longer in India. The average life expectancy today is 62 years up from 54 just 10 years ago and a mere 30 years in 1947 when the country became independent.

The extra years for many old people in India have come as a mixed blessing. They have long been venerated in traditional Indian society but with the rapid change of social mores in the past few decades, old people have increasingly been marginalised and often humiliated by the younger generation.

This is particularly evident in cities and towns where the ancient institution of the extended family is being abandoned for want of space and the need for privacy.

In a society where elderly parents have traditionally wielded enormous clout as patriarchs and matriarchs, the fall in status is all the more traumatic.

To make matters worse for the old, human rights groups who are so active when espousing the cause of oppressed women are not so keen to take up cudgels on behalf of the aged.

For most old people however, the fear of being abandoned by their children is far more potent than a life of humiliation with them.

Every year thousands of aged parents are turned out by their children. In New Delhi, the number of burglaries with assault often resulting in murder of lonely old couples has risen at such an alarming rate that the local police have advised the elderly to move in with their children.

But in most cases, elderly parents have been living alone only because they could not find a place in their children's homes.

The circumstances of the old are relatively better in rural India where traditional values still hold sway but even in the countryside the spread of urban culture is making the elderly increasingly insecure. Unlike in the West, there are hardly any old people's homes where they can spend the last years of their lives in relative comfort and peace.

In the past decade however, there are some signs that sections of the elderly population are beginning to organise themselves.

The elderly activists feel that unless the old themselves agitate for better living conditions they may be totally crushed under the wheels of a rapidly changing society.

Guardian, 30 September 1991

Some questions for consideration

- Why are there more elderly people in India today than in the past?
- Why are the elderly in India losing the status that they used to have?
- What problems do some elderly people face, particularly in urban areas?
- What changes do you think elderly activists need to campaign for?

Activity 4 **Images of Ageing**

The following are extracts from *Ageing for Beginners**, written by Mary Stott when she retired. Read through all the extracts or ask someone to read them out.

☐ In small groups discuss the parts of the extracts that are in italics. Do you agree or disagree with these views? What are *your* views?

☐ Feed back to the larger group the positive varied experiences of ageing that younger people should perhaps consider.

1 It is seldom the elderly who go on and on about the awfulness of being old. Maggie Kuhn, leader of the American Grey Panthers, said that old age should be a 'flowering'. George Bernard Shaw decided at sixty that he had got his 'seventh wind' and, according to his biographer, attained a delightful sense of freedom and became 'adventurous and irresponsible'. *The spectres which could so easily haunt us are projections of the fears of younger people of the loss of the powers that are so important to them.* It is a fact that only a very small percentage of us are going to end up blind and boring or deaf and daft, and it is salutary to remember that a small percentage of us might also have been gravely injured in a car crash in our twenties, or smitten with polio or multiple sclerosis in our thirties. All the ills that flesh is heir to do not wait to descend on us in our seventh or eighth decade, and what the young see when they look at us is by no means always what we know about ourselves.

2 *We are apt to forget the extent to which the communications industry is in the hands of the young and the young middle-aged. It is their images of ageing that need to be rethought.* A schoolboy interviewed by Ronald Blythe for his fine book The View in Winter said, 'When you read about old people in the papers or see programmes about them on television, they are always shown as sad and ill and lonely.' Programme-makers, novelists, playwrights, journalists in all media want above all nowadays to be 'realistic' - which seems to mean seeing situations always in black and grey. Painters use shadow to define shape, not to obscure it. Writers might remember that.

3 *Why do there have to be any images of 'old age'?* There used, I suppose, to be images of 'middle age' - 'fair, fat and forty' - but that kind of thing has passed out of fashion since women became more independent and developed more obviously individual personalities. If we do not typecast nineteen-year-olds, there is certainly no reason to typecast ninety-year-olds. They are, in fact, likely to have acquired with the years more emphatic, sharply defined characters. And whether this is so or not, *we know that people remain themselves, however long they live, and never become carbon copies of one another, with the same needs, wishes, skills, prejudices, likings.* Any one of us in our seventh, eighth and even ninth decade, looking in the mirror, sees himself, herself, as not essentially different from the young person of fifty years ago.

---

* Mary Stott, *Ageing for Beginners*, Blackwell, 1981 (italics added).

Activity 5 Caring for the Elderly

No one can convince me that any age in itself is a state of mind. And its ruthless enemy is convention, not the biological clock. Experience, maybe a long working life, and memory reaching back to a past crowded with men, women and events, are not often the stuff that apathy and disease feed on. Somewhere, environment and lack of occupation take over.

The forbidden thing should be to brand all elderly men and women as senile. Everyone who lives grows older. The majority don't grow soured, helpless, or bitter and irresponsible, simply because the passing years slow down their tempo of living. One of my favourite visitors, well past her eightieth birthday, gets her car out and drives herself and a sister over to see me every ten days or so. And there's no special calendar to measure the time or capacity to think, or to feel. Exquisite singing, or a violin or oboe superbly played can send sensuous shivers of delight down an elderly spine. Besides, people do fall passionately in love at seventy, when 'with-my-body-I-thee-worship' still means precisely what it says.

To care for old people calls for warm perception, patience and special skills. And not in these stark, disciplined lounges, but in some room where they can move about like human beings, where there is sunlight and fresh air, where sometimes they can listen to music, with nostalgic melody and rhythm that can bring back the happy light of other days. A single picture on one of these grim walls could open windows on another world.

Men and women with terminal illness may have hardened arteries and creaking joints, but their minds are in no way crippled. For them to be enclosed in nursing homes where night and day, senility, with its apathy, strident garrulity, and frequently painful psychiatric problems, must call the tune for everyone, can only be a living death.

Ellen Newton, *This Bed My Centre*, Virago, 1980.

Ellen Newton wrote her book, from which the extract on the left is taken, while bedbound in a residential home.

What are her views on ageing?

- ☐ Using her ideas on your own, or in small groups, draw up ideal guidelines for nursing staff in residential homes, headed **'How to give the best care to elderly people living in residential homes.'**
- ☐ Invite a residential worker from a home near you to come and discuss your ideas with you.

Activity 6 **Poem**

'Kate'

'Kate', the writer of this poem, was unable to speak, but was occasionally seen to write. After her death, her hospital locker was emptied and this poem was found.

What do you see nurses
What do you see?
Are you thinking
when you are looking at me
A crabbit old woman
not very wise,
Uncertain of habit
with far-away eyes,
Who dribbles her food
and makes no reply,
When you say in a loud voice
'I do wish you'd try'
Who seems not to notice
the things that you do,
And forever is losing
a stocking or shoe,
Who unresisting or not
lets you do as you will
with bathing and feeding
the long day to fill,
Is that what you're thinking,
is that what you see?
Then open your eyes nurse,
You're not looking at me.
I'll tell you who I am
as I sit here so still,
As I use at your bidding
as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of ten
with a father and mother,
Brothers and sisters who
love one another,
A young girl of sixteen
with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon now
a lover she'll meet:
A bride soon at twenty,
my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows
that I promised to keep:
At twenty-five now
I have young of my own
Who need me to build
a secure happy home.
A young woman of thirty
my young now grow fast,
Bound to each other
with ties that should last:
At forty my young ones
now grown will soon be gone,
But my man stays beside me
to see I don't mourn:
At fifty once more
babies play round my knee,
Again we know children
my loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me,
my husband is dead,
I look at the future
I shudder with dread.
For my young are all busy
rearing young of their own,
And I think of the years
and the love I have known.
I'm an old woman now
and nature is cruel,
'Tis her jest to make
old age look like a fool.
The body it crumbles,
grace and vigour depart,
There now is a stone
Where once I had a heart:
But inside this old carcase
a young girl still dwells,
And now and again
my battered heart swells,
I remember the joys,
I remember the pain,
And I'm loving and living
life over again,
I think of the years
all too few - gone too fast,
And accept the stark fact
that nothing can last.
So open your eyes nurses,
Open and see,
Not a crabbit old woman,
look closer - see ME.

(reprinted from Carver and Liddiard, 1978)

- What do you think has made Kate write this poem?
- What emotions is she experiencing in the poem?
- What sort of life has Kate had?
- Why does she 'shudder with dread' at the future?
- What lessons might hospitals and nursing homes learn from this poem?

3

CREATIVE WRITING

Creative writing is something everyone can do, and it can be a very satisfying experience to share the results with a group. People are usually surprised and delighted by what they can achieve and by other people's reaction to it.

The idea of creative writing is that it should be fun, stimulating, and give people a chance to tap their imagination and share the results with others.

Guidance for Group Leaders

PREPARATION

Some of the Activities need planning the session before because they require people to bring something like a treasured object, a short story to read together, photographs, or pictures cut from magazines.

If there are no tables, make sure people have something to lean their writing on, like clipboards or books (atlases are good!).

Everyone will need to bring paper and a pen or pencil.

Read the chosen Activity through together at the beginning of each session.

Begin by relaxing everyone and encouraging an open, trusting atmosphere by using one of the Warm-Ups on the Warm-Up sheet (p.28).

ACTIVITIES

The Activities provided suggest several ideas that can be used as starting-points for writing sessions, or you can devise your own. Each Activity will be enough for one session.

Having a common topic and a set time to write in makes writing fun and reduces anxiety - after all, no one could produce a masterpiece in twenty minutes! Reading out to each other and receiving other people's comments gives everyone a sense of both individual and group achievement and are very enjoyable. People are usually amazed to find how differently people respond to the same starting point or stimulus.

It is important to give everyone time to comment on and appreciate each piece of writing immediately after it has been read out. You can use the Feedback sheet (p.42) if you wish.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR EACH SESSION

Before the session

☐ Choose from the Activities an idea or starting-point to stimulate people's memories and imagination.

☐ Think about how you are going to divide the time. A guide is to allow approximately *5 minutes per person* for reading out and receiving other people's comments.

During the session

☐ Start with a Warm-Up.

☐ Introduce the starting-point Activity sheet. Allow approximately *15 minutes* for this. By the end of it everyone's brains should be buzzing with ideas and they are ready to start writing.

☐ Set the task and start everyone writing. Allow approximately *20 minutes* for the writing.

TAKE A TEA BREAK?

☐ *Reading-out.* Introduce the reading-out by saying that after hearing each piece people might like to say anything they particularly liked, found interesting, funny, true, etc.

☐ Finish with a *general discussion* about the session. Did people enjoy it? Find it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the pieces of writing?

FOLLOW-UP

☐ Type up pieces and put them into a booklet, or make a display or exhibition of the work and mount it on large pieces of coloured paper or card to show in a local school, community centre or library. This is a good way of reaching a wider audience. It will interest them and may inspire them too.

☐ Invite an author to come and run a session for you to read out their own work or talk about their own writing.

☐ Borrow a video from the library of writers talking about how they go about writing.

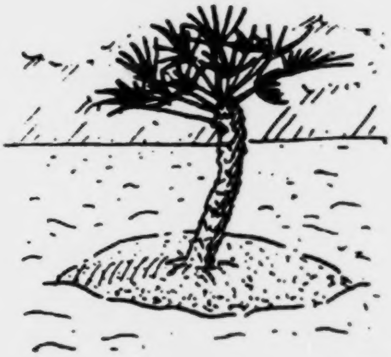
CONCLUSION

As well as some of the ideas suggested here, people often enjoy writing about their past experiences and some of the ideas in the **Reminiscence** section (p. 119) could be used as starting-points for writing sessions.

Warm-Up

Ask the group to complete one of the following sentences:

- A good thing that happened to me this week was ....
- One thing that I would really like to do is ....
- My favourite moment of the day is ....
- My greatest achievement is ....
- If I won £1 million ....
- If I could change the world I'd ....
- If I was writing the manifesto for the next government I would include ....
- A good way of relaxing is ....
- What I'd like to change about myself is ....
- Retired people need ....
- One good thing about getting older is ....
- During the war I ....
- My favourite writer is ....
- If I was going to a desert island the music I would take is ....



Activities

Activity 1 **Short Story**

PREPARATION

One person volunteer to bring a short story from a magazine or from a book of collected short stories. The local library will have plenty.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Read the short story aloud together. One person can volunteer or you can take it in turns.

☐ Spend *10-20 minutes* discussing it.

Discussion

- What happened? What were the characters like? How did they get on?
- When was the story taking place? Nowadays? In the past? What makes you think this?
- What was the tone of the story? Funny? Sad? Frightening? Mysterious?

WRITING

☐ Now prepare to write. Continue the story in one of the following ways:

Three years on

or

The story from the viewpoint of another character

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what you liked particularly about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING
Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 2 **Hands**

PREPARATION

None.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Make a pair with the person sitting next to you. Look carefully at your own and each other's hands. Talk about them.

☐ All together in the group write down on a big piece of paper all the words you can think of that describe how hands look and feel...**smooth, silky, rough, bony, plump,** etc. Next write all the words which describe what hands can do...**stroke, clap, slap, cradle,** etc.

WRITING

☐ Write a piece called *Hands* in any way you wish (poem, prose, or list).

You could draw an outline round your own hand and fill it in with words which describe your own hands or tell their story

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

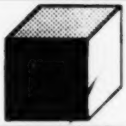
☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

You could end the session by reading the poem *Hands* by Vernon Scannell (p. 43).

Activity 3 **Treasure Box**



PREPARATION

None.

STARTING-POINT

Sounds, sights, smells, tastes, feelings you treasure. The idea is that each person writes a line describing a sound, sight, taste, feeling, smell they enjoy and then these are arranged to make a group poem.

☐ Start by reading *A Box of Treasures* written in this way by the Barton Pensioners' Club in Oxford.

☐ Write two or three lines each starting with the words:

> *The most beautiful sound (or smell or taste or sight or feeling) in the world is...*

Spend *5-10 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your lines to each other.

☐ Someone write them down starting with the sentence:

> *In the box we shall place...*

Try and write them in the order which sounds best.

ENDING

Discuss the session and how you found it. Each think of an object which belongs to you which you particularly treasure. Share with each other. You could bring the object or a photograph of it - or just the idea itself - to the next session of the group and write about it.

The sound of church bells across the fields
The noise in the club
My love of the sea and the sound of ships' sirens

The quiet of the evening
The sound of waves on the shore
The peaceful dawn with only the sound of birds
A cat purring
The whirr of the milk float and the clink of the bottles

The blossom on the trees in spring
Jack Frost window patterns
The calm after the storm
The noise of the children in and out of the flats

Searching the beach for shells
The sound of different birds together
The clink of ice in a whisky glass
The sound of horses' hooves nearing the finishing post

Bluebells carpeting the floor of a wood
Perfume counters in exclusive stores
The smell of hyacinths
Another barmy idea!
The smell of crisp, brown fried onions sizzling in a pan

The sound of trees rustling and rattling in the wind
Walking through deep piles of autumn leaves

Activity 4 Themes

PREPARATION

Read this Activity through together and make sure the instructions are clear.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Agree on a list of three 'ingredients'. They can be anything.

For example:

an unopened letter
a river
the colour red

or

moonlight
a tree
a pair of shoes

WRITING

☐ Write a short story or poem including these three things. Give it a title.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 5 **Happy Ending?**

PREPARATION

None.

STARTING-POINT

You are going to write a funny, romantic or sinister story with a last line which finishes:

> *'Well', he/she thought to her/himself, 'that's the last time I try that'.*

WRITING

☐ Write your story. Give it a title.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Try to guess which category each story comes into - funny, romantic, sinister, etc. Say at which point in the story this became obvious and why.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 6 **Surprises**

PREPARATION
None.

STARTING-POINT
You are going to write a story ending with the sentence:

> *'I was very surprised', he/she said, 'very surprised indeed'.*

Start by discussing surprising things which have happened to you in your lives.

WRITING
☐ Write the story. Give it a title.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT
☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts. Was there a surprise? Say what was good about each story. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING
Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 7 **Mysteries**

PREPARATION

None.

STARTING-POINT

You are going to write a mysterious or sinister story.

WRITING

☐ Start with the sentence:

The door creaked behind him/her.

or

He/she saw the side of the curtain twitch slightly.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what made each mysterious or sinister (the words used? colours? time of day? setting? the characters and how they looked, move, spoke?)

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 8 **Pictures**

PREPARATION

Each person bring two pictures *(of anything)* cut out from a magazine or newspaper.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Put the collection of pictures onto a table in the middle.

☐ Each person choose one. Make a pair with someone sitting next to you and, taking it in turns, explore what your picture means to you, why you chose it.

Take about *5 minutes* each.

WRITING

The picture might have sparked off a memory, an idea for a story or poem, or some reflections on life and society.

☐ Write about the picture in whatever way you like.

Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one.
Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activity 9 Faces

PREPARATION

Everyone bring one or two pictures of people, cut out of magazines or newspapers, to this session.

Read this Activity through together and make sure the instructions are clear.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Put the pictures onto a table in the middle of the group.

☐ Each person choose one, look at it, and see what they can tell about the person's character and life from it.

The face... any lines... the eyes, lips, nose, set of the jaw, expression... what emotion, if any, is conveyed?

The clothes, hair, surroundings... what can you tell from these?

☐ Make a pair with your neighbour and tell them what you think about the person in the picture you have chosen. (Talking about something first often makes it easier to write about.)

☐ Spend about *15-20 minutes* on this.

WRITING

☐ Write a short piece called *A Day In My Life* as if you were the person in your picture. Include what you feel and think as that person as well as what you do.

☐ Spend about *15-20 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult?

Activity 10 **Encounters**

PREPARATION

Read this Activity through together and make sure the instructions are clear.

Bring your pieces entitled *A Day In My Life* to this session.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Get into pairs.

☐ Look at your *A Day In My Life* pieces and work out an imaginary meeting between the two characters:

Where would this be?

When? What time of year? Day?

How would they meet?

What would happen?

Spend *10-15 minutes* on this.

WRITING

☐ Write down the dialogue. It can be quite brief but try to make it in character.

Spend *5 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Each pair first tell the rest of the group which two characters they've been working with. Then describe the meeting, where it was, when it was, how it came about, what happened...and finally read out the dialogue.

FEEDBACK

☐ Everyone in the group can have a chance to comment on how convincing the meeting sounds and how in character the dialogue is.

Activity 11 **Poem**

PREPARATION

☐ Have one photocopy of the poem *Hands* by Vernon Scannell for each person. Bring a dictionary.

STARTING-POINT

☐ Someone volunteer to read *Hands* aloud.

☐ Everyone read through it silently.

☐ Discuss the poem.

Discussion

- What is the poem about?
- Any difficult words? (Look up!)
- Read again lines 3-12. What is the poet saying here?
- Lines 19-21: why does he like 'old labouring mens's' hands?
- What is the effect on us of the last five lines?

Finally look at the words the poet uses to describe how hands look and feel or what they do.

WRITING

☐ Write your own piece called *Hands* in any way you like. Spend about *15 minutes* on this.

READING-OUT

☐ Read out your versions to each other.

☐ Comment on each other's efforts, saying what was good about each one. Use the Feedback sheet here if you want to.

ENDING

Each person say how they enjoyed the writing activity. Was it easy or difficult? How alike or different were the results?

Activities 2 & 11 handout

VERNON SCANNELL
Hands

Hands can be eloquent though sometimes they
Mislead us utterly in what they say.
I have seen slender fingered, candle-white
Supple and fluent hands that many might
Call 'sensitive', 'a pianist's hands', 'artistic':
But these were owned by someone mean, sadistic,
Hostile to art, a gross materialist.
I know another man, fine pianist,
Whose powerful, sausage fingered, meaty fists
Should hang from goal-keeper's or butcher's wrists,
Yet on the gleaming keys these hands could wake
Ghosts of drowned nightingales in starry lakes.
I knew a fighter too, fast welterweight,
Whose punches could crack bone and could create
Sudden shattered galaxies in the head,
Yet from his hands alone you might have said
That he was not unusually strong,
For they were hairless, pale, the fingers long.
So many hands will tell use lies, but I
Have never known old labouring men's deny
Their simple character, they never lie.
For years they have manhandled spade or hook,
Shovel, axe or pick until they look
Like weathered tools, mattock, hammer, vice,
Battered, annealed by wind and sun and ice.
I like to watch them rest on tables, knees,
Lifting a pint of beer or with deft ease
Rolling a fag which later burns between
Dark, oaken knuckles which have never been
Surely as soft and sensitive to pain
As this pen-pusher's hand I look at now;
But most of all I like to witness how
They lift small, tired grandchildren and hold
Them curled and safe, how gently they enfold
Their always welcome, always cherished guests,
Become protecting, gnarled and living nests.

Taken from Vernon Scannell, *Funeral Games and Other Poems*, Robson Books, 1987.

Feedback Sheet

These are some of the questions you might like to consider when reading-out and discussing the group's work.

- What did you (the writer) hope to get across and how well do you think you succeeded?

- Is there anything in particular you would like comments on?

The idea ?

Any words or phrases?

The flow of the piece?

The beginning/the ending?

Anything else?

4

LISTENING SKILLS

This section is designed to increase awareness of the difference good listening skills can make to our relationships with others and to recognise what those skills are.

Listening to and being listened to by other people are one of the ways in which we build and maintain relationships throughout our lives.

We usually just take listening for granted and don't think of it as a skill. This is probably because like other personal skills it is something most of us just 'pick up' as we go along.

Probably we all listen better at some times than at others - it's hard to give someone else your full attention if you're tired or busy or have something on your mind or don't much like what they're saying.

When a group is learning together it is important that everyone should have their say and be listened to.

Guidance for Group Leaders

PREPARATION

You will need to photocopy enough Activity sheets for each person or at least one between two.

GENERAL GUIDANCE NOTES

The session could take place in two hours if you timed it as suggested in the Activities. Or it could take two sessions, with the second devoted to discussion and the feedback of any real-life examples people have experienced since the first session.

Listening is a good topic to use towards the beginning of a group's life as it gives people the chance to experience what it is like to listen and be listened to and what it is like *not* to listen and be listened to, and how it makes them feel.

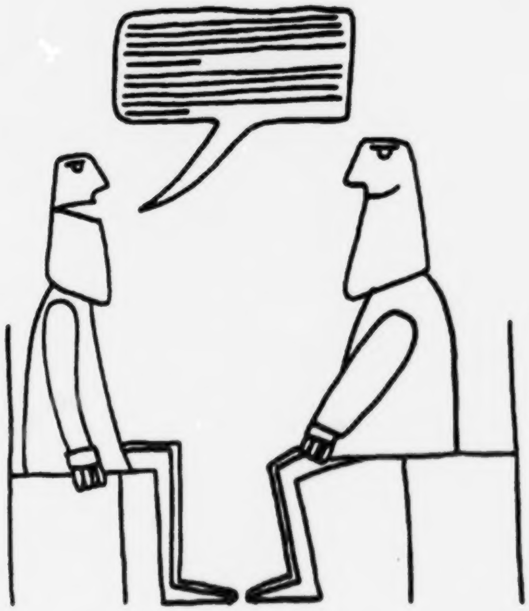
The session is planned so that one Activity follows another in a logical way. It would probably be best just to follow the whole session through from beginning to end as it is.

WARM-UP

If you don't know each other's names, start with some introductions, each person in turn saying their name, a bit about where they come from originally, how they heard about the group and what they are expecting this session to be like.

If you already know each other try a round of each person saying the best and worst thing that happened to them during the week.

Or you can just start by reading the introduction and asking for any comments.



Activities

Activity 1 How Does It Feel?

This Activity is designed to make everyone more aware of the skills you use when you are really listening to others and what a difference it can make to how people feel.

☐ Get into pairs. Tell each other in turn about a time recently when you felt that the person you were talking to wasn't really listening to you. Don't talk about what you were trying to tell the other person but just remember and describe how it felt **not to be listened to**. (*5 minutes*)

☐ Whole group. Check your reactions with the list below. Did any of these match the way you felt? (*10 minutes*)

'I felt like crying.'

'I felt angry.'

'I felt small.'

'I felt stupid.'

'I felt I was boring.'

'I just wanted to go away.'

'I just dried up.'

MOST OF US DON'T LIKE TO FEEL THIS WAY.

Activity 2 **They're Not Listening...**

Work as a whole group but first spend a minute or two thinking about your own answers to the following questions.

- How did you know the other person wasn't listening to you?
- What did they look like or do?
- Did any of the following apply?

They didn't look at me.

Their eyes were glazed.

They kept walking about.

They just kept on
(looking at the television...
chopping the cabbage
...reading the paper...etc.).

They were fiddling.

They didn't react.

☐ Share your answers in the whole group.

If someone is prepared to volunteer you could list the points as they come up.
(10 minutes)

Activity 3 **Listening**

Read the whole activity through first and check that you understand what to do before you start.

☐ Get into pairs and do the following listening exercise.

Tell each other what you did before you came here today.

Take it in turns to listen to each other for two minutes each. Listen with your full attention and let the other person know that you are listening to them but don't speak.

☐ Immediately after each of you has had a turn at talking, tell your listener how you felt being listened to compared with the time when you weren't. People might say things like:

'I felt good.'

'I felt interesting.'

'I felt warm and comfortable.'

'I felt it was easy to talk.'

'I felt alright.'

☐ When you have both finished your turns and told each other what it felt like everyone get back together in the whole group.

Briefly share your experiences in the whole group.

(15 minutes)

Activity 4 **Being Listened to...**

☐ In the whole group, discuss how you could tell that the other person was listening to you by their behaviour.

You might come up with a list which includes the following:

They looked into my eyes.

They smiled.

They said"uh-huh", or made encouraging noises.

They sat still.

They sat facing me.

They leaned forward a bit.

They had their arms on their lap and looked relaxed.

They looked as if they were going to stay there.

☐ If you have a volunteer you can list these points too, and pin them up next to the first list for comparison.

(15 minutes)

TAKE A TEA BREAK?

Activity 5 **Feedback**

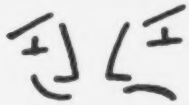
For the second half of the session you could have a more general discussion using Activity 6, or just use the following questions to prompt discussion amongst you.

- **How did you feel about doing these exercises?**

  People sometimes feel there is something false about practising something that is assumed to just come naturally, and it's important to accept this feeling.

- **Do you ever find it difficult to listen to other people? What makes it difficult?**
- **What did you get out of the session which was surprising or interesting or useful?**
- **Is there anything you will do or change as a result?**
- **How might today's session be useful to us as a group?**

Activity 6 **Agree or Disagree?**



Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- Listening is something we take for granted. It isn't something we learn and there is something false about practising it and thinking of it as a skill.
- ***It is important to take turns listening and talking.***
- Listening and being listened to are one of the ways in which we build and maintain relationships throughout our lives.
- ***Some people are good listeners and some are not.***
- Probably we all listen better at some times than at others - it's hard to give someone else your full attention if you're tired or busy or have something on your mind or don't much like what they're saying.
- ***When a group is learning together it is important that everyone can have their say and be listened to.***

Discuss each of these in turn.

5

SERVICES AND INFORMATION

This section will help the group familiarise themselves with sources of information about social services and welfare rights in their locality. It also aims to encourage people to speak up for themselves and where relevant, complain.

With changes in community care, local authorities are taking more responsibility for services. Social services departments are required to produce a yearly Community Care Plan which is available in all libraries, outlining their plans for the year. This document also includes information about how people using services are to be consulted and how and where they should complain about services.

There have been cutbacks in many services and benefits over recent years. There have also been cuts in advisory services in many areas. The group will no doubt have many experiences related to both inadequacy of services and actual cuts which may make them feel quite angry about provision. The materials here recognise problems in the level of and quality of services. They also suggest, firstly, that it is nevertheless important to gain access to information about your rights and, secondly, that inadequate services should be challenged.

Guidance for Group Leaders

PREPARATION

For some of the Activities you will need to get hold of information from your local social services department and/or Age Concern about services for the elderly in your area. Their phone numbers and addresses will be in the local phone book.

Ask your social services department for the loan of a copy of the Community Care Plan.

This is a large topic and there is plenty of material here, so you may find it useful to spend TWO sessions on it.

Because of the specialist nature of much of the information people might want, this is a session that might particularly benefit from a speaker (see p. 85).

SESSION ONE

WARM-UP

In turn ask each person to suggest **ONE** service they think is particularly important for an older person and to briefly say why it is important.

ACTIVITIES

First, try a brainstorming Activity in groups of two or three:

Activity 1
Information

☐ Give each small group copies of the sheet entitled *Where Should I Go For the Information?* Ask them to collect some ideas for each question. It would be useful to divide up the questions to save time. Allow about *ten minutes.*

☐ When they have collected as many ideas as possible ask one person from each group to report back. Then pass round the sheets entitled *Some Ideas*... (pp. 57-9). Make it clear that this is not a fully comprehensive list. Suggest that they keep this list for further reference as they should find the information useful.

You could then choose one of the two following Activities. Both of them require access to information sources about services for the elderly.

Activity 2
Advice Manuals

This Activity, *Using an Advice Manual,* involves using guidance manuals or leaflets in order to answer questions about services or information.

Activity 3
Welfare Rights

This Activity, *Welfare Rights - Case Studies,* involves discussion focused on some case studies.

You may decide to focus on one of these Activities, or involve half the group in one of them and half in the other.

As before, ask people to work in small groups. One person should agree to record the ideas of the group, ready to report back to the big group.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the session, ask each person to give one example of a piece of new information they find useful.

SESSION TWO

WARM-UP

Ask the group if any of them has used any part of what they learnt at the previous session since last week.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 4
Community Care

☐ Begin by asking the group what they think 'Care in the Community' means. They might mention a range of services, including residential care. They might point out that institutional care, for instance in hospitals, is giving way to care from other sources, including private organisations, voluntary organisations and families. They might also point out that many services have been cut or were never adequate in the first place. Increasing reliance on the private sector and cuts in local authority care often mean individuals and families are having to pay for services or directly provide them.

☐ Give out the questionnaire called *Care in the Community* (pp. 62-3). Ask each person to fill in the questionnaire individually and then compare with a partner.

☐ The pairs (or threes) should then tackle either all, or some (e.g. two each), of the *Questions* (p. 64). One person in each small group will need to write down some ideas in preparation for reporting back to the whole group. Point out that there will be disagreement and that groups should record the different ideas which they have.

☐ Allow about *twenty minutes* for small group discussion. Then in the main group ask the small groups in turn to report back.

Activity 5
Speaking Up

☐ Either read out the first section *What's the Point?* (p. 66), or ask the group to read it to themselves.

☐ Ask for examples of times when members of the group did complain about a service (*Your Experiences* (p. 67)). What was their complaint? How had they made their complaint? Did they get what they wanted?

☐ Then ask people to consider, in small groups, what the DO's and DON'Ts are about speaking up for ourselves (*Being Heard* (p. 67)). What are the most effective ways of getting what we want and what are the less effective ways? Ask them to make two brief lists and report two ideas each from these lists to the main group.

CONCLUSION

Ask everyone to suggest one item each thinks should be in the next local government election manifestos.

FOLLOW-UP IDEAS

Ask the group if they would like to invite a speaker from the social services department to talk about the local Community Care Plan. Find out if one of the group would be willing to organise this.

RESOURCES

- Try your local **social services department** and/or **Age Concern** for advice on local services for the elderly.
- Local **welfare rights centres** will have information about rights and benefits.
- A useful reference is the *National Welfare Rights Handbook* produced by the Child Poverty Action Group - ask at your library for this.
- Another useful reference is the *Directory of Services for Elderly People, 1992*, published by Longman/CPA - try the library or Age Concern.
- *CANS*, the national handbook of the Citizens' Advice Bureau.
- **Help the Aged** runs a confidential national helpline, with advice workers giving advice on a range of issues, including benefits, home helps, nursing homes, supports and aids, etc. **Telephone 0800 289 404**, Monday to Friday, 10am - 4pm.

- There may be local helplines too. Contact your social services department for information, or ask at the library.

SPEAKERS

It is very useful to ask for expert advice to deal with these complex issues. You should be able to organise a speaker from any of the following organisations:

Organisation	*Suggested topic*
Social Services	Planning for community care
Welfare Rights Centres	Welfare rights
Age Concern	Campaigns and services
Pensioners' Action Group	Making your voice heard

Activities

Activity 1 Where Should I Go For the Information?

There are many sources of information in your locality. Collectively you will probably already know about most of these.

QUESTIONNAIRE

☐ In small groups of three or four, see how many answers you can think of to these questions. There is a separate sheet with some ideas on for you to compare with yours, but collect your own thoughts first.

Where should you go for help if...

- You wanted to find out about education and leisure classes in your area?
- You wanted to find out what benefits you were entitled to?
- Your council house is in need of repair?
- You are concerned about your electrical wiring system?
- You can't cope with the demands of looking after someone or feel you need some support in doing so?
- You want to meet new people?
- You can't cope with the housework very well?
- You'd like to go out but can't manage public transport?
- You want to get involved with activities involving other retired people or over 60s?
- You want to find out what services and entitlements are available to you in the locality?

WHERE SHOULD I GO?

Some ideas...

Sources of information will vary from area to area and over time. The ideas below are therefore not hard and fast. However, they should provide a useful start to your search for information.

1 Education and leisure

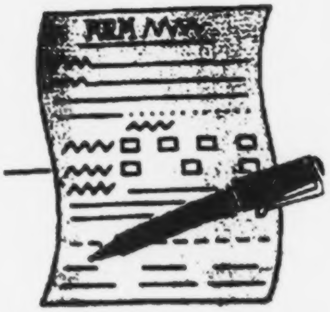
Probably the best place to start here is the local or central library. They keep a record of all classes. You could also try ringing or writing to your local **community education office**. The address will be in the phonebook under the local authority heading.

Health education classes may also run in your area covering a wide range of health related matters. Look under **Health Education** in your phonebook or try your local **health centre**. If this fails, try contacting the **District Health Authority**.

The **Workers' Educational Association** runs many classes in towns and rural localities, some of them without fees. You will also find their address and number in the phonebook.

Try your local **recreation department** and your local **community centre** too.

2 Benefits



Try the **Citizens' Advice Bureau**. You should have one in your locality. The number is in the phonebook. Ring for an appointment, or get someone to do it for you.

You may also find there are several **advice centres** close to you. Ask your library for information about these.

Some areas have a **Claimants' Union**. Find out from your library or information centre if yours has one.

3 Housing

Ring the **housing department** of the local authority.

Visit your local **advice centre**. The library or social services department will have an address.

If you have further problems contact your **local councillors**. The council can give you their names and addresses or try the library. Many councillors hold regular surgeries and these are sometimes advertised in local or community newspapers.

4 Electrical wiring

If you live in a council house, contact your **local housing department**.

Ring your local office of **Age Concern**. They may have a scheme for checking wiring and appliances with no charge.

Your local **electricity board** may have special schemes for pensioners.

5 Caring

Contact your local **social services department**. They will send you information about the range of services for carers in your area.

6 Meeting new people

There are all sorts of things you can do here.

Find out what groups meet at your local **community centre**.

Your **local library** and/or **tourist information centre** should keep details of clubs and activities in your area.

Read the *What's On* columns in the local press and free press and listen to local radio.

Visit the **local church**.

Contact **Age Concern** for their information.

Ask your **doctor** or **health visitor**.

If you would like someone to visit you, contact the local **Voluntary Services** organisation. Or find out through **social services** or the library what local **Good Neighbour** schemes there are.

7 Housework

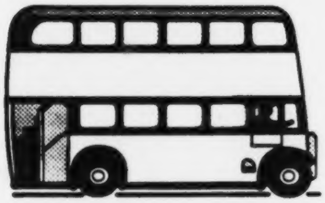
Ask the advice of your **health visitor**. If you don't have one, ring your local surgery for an appointment. They will visit you.

Try the local **Home Care Service**. Find the number from social services. This is usually for people who are chair- or bed-bound.

Again, contact the local **Good Neighbour** schemes.

There are also private agencies in your area. Social services will have their number.

8 Problems with public transport



You may have a cheap and reliable **taxi scheme** in your area. Age Concern or social services will be able to give you details. A driver will pick you up from your door, deliver you to your destination and then collect you when you ask.

9 Activities with other retired people

Contact your **trade union** office. Unions like NALGO and the TGWU have thriving retired members' branches.

Contact **Age Concern** for details of any groups operating. If there is an **Agewell** scheme in your area there may be active groups you can join.

Find out from the library or Age Concern whether your area has a **Pensioners' Action Group**.

Your social services will have a full list of clubs and organisations. So will the library.

10 Services and entitlements locally

Your **social services department** will probably have an up-to-date publication detailing all your entitlements and services available. Try also **Age Concern** which has very useful *fact sheets* on a wide range of issues.

Your **local advice centre** will be able to give you detailed advice. Find their address in the phonebook, or from the library, social services or Age Concern.

Help the Aged (St. James Walk, London, EC1R OBE, **telephone 071 253 0253**) also has useful information sheets and helpsheets. They run a national helpline called **SeniorLine** with advice on a wide range of matters (**telephone 0800 289 404**, Monday-Friday, 10am-4pm).

Note: Don't ever feel you are wasting someone's time by asking for advice. That is what professionals and public servants are paid to do! They usually get a great deal of pleasure from helping you and will give you all the help they can. This of course does not mean they can meet all your needs when there are cuts and shortages. But they will be able to help you make the best use of what is available.

Activity 2 **Using an Advice Manual**

For this activity you will need a set of advice booklets about services for older people. Contact your **social services department** or **Age Concern** and ask for multiple copies of advice manuals or leaflets. You will probably need at least one copy between two people.

☐ Begin by thoroughly familiarising yourselves with the material, paying special attention to how it is laid out. For instance, check whether there are contents pages and have a look at what the contents include. Look at the back of books or leaflets and see if there is a subject index or a list of resources.

☐ Then, in pairs, *either* take it in turn to pose the following questions and let the other person try and find the answer, *or* together find out the answers to the following questions.

1 'I would like to travel more by train but I don't know if I can afford it.'

2 'I would like some legal advice on a legal matter. Where can I go?'

3 'My mother has Alzheimer's disease. Where can I find support for myself to help me cope?'

4 'I need some more equipment to help me care for my father at home.'

5 'I have to plan a funeral but I don't know what to do and I feel shocked and upset.'

6 'I can't cope on my income. What benefits can I claim?'

7 'I need to find out more about residential care. What can I do?'

8 'My mother's first language is not English and she has to go into hospital. How can I find out about language support for her so she can understand what is happening to her?' [The booklet may not cover this directly - but think of local organisations to contact for help.]

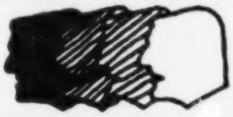
9 'I would like more general information about caring. Where can I find this?'

10 'I would like to make a will. What should I do?'

11 'How can I keep warmer this winter?'

12 'I'd like meals on wheels. Whom should I contact?'

Activity 3 Welfare Rights - Case Studies



The following are people faced with common situations.

☐ Imagine that they presented their problems initially to you. What advice do you think would help them and where would you direct them for further help?

Use publications from the social services, Age Concern, advice centres, etc., to help you in your advice-giving.

Case Study 1

Louise (63) has a mother of 84 who has recently moved in with her. She has Alzheimer's disease and can do increasingly little for herself. She is also very confused. Louise is not very strong physically and cannot do much lifting. She is also beginning to feel isolated and depressed. She would like to keep her mother at home with her as long as possible but is wondering how she can cope.

Case Study 2

Ben recently moved to Oxford to be near his sister. However, sadly she died. Ben now has to face making funeral arrangements in a place he is unfamiliar with. He is also feeling isolated and lonely.

Case Study 3

Dulcie has recently retired. She is fit and well but realises she has given her retirement very little thought and wonders how she can fill her days. She is very used to a day structured by work and has relied on work mates for friendships. She has a partner who retired four years ago and he is now enjoying himself with hobbies and meetings. He is very concerned about Dulcie's lack of preparation but doesn't want to give up any of his own activities.

Case Study 4

Shanaz' mother has become very dependent on her. Shanaz felt obliged to give up her part-time job to be with her mother. She is married and her partner is in work but he earns a low wage. Shanaz is concerned about not being able to meet her bills and giving her mother the quality of care she needs. She is also concerned about receiving care from agencies who are not sufficiently sensitive to her mother's limited English. Shanaz herself is at risk of becoming isolated and lonely.

Activity 4 Care in the Community

In 1989 the Griffith Report on Care in the Community recommended that local authorities provide 'packages of care' for the elderly that would support them in leading as independent lives as possible, in the community.

A recent study conducted by the Oxford Pensioners' Action Group and Ruskin College (1991) asked pensioners what sorts of services THEY felt they thought needed developing if these changes were to be effective. This information was passed to the Oxfordshire Social Services Department as it drew up the local Community Care Plan, which all areas are obliged to produce each year. The pensioners questioned mentioned the services below as being important.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Tick which of these services:

1. You have used.
2. You might want to use in the future.
3. You think are important in keeping people independent as long as possible.

Service	You have used	You might use	You think is important
Pensioners' clubs	☐	☐	☐
Education & leisure facilities	☐	☐	☐
Nursing	☐	☐	☐
Chiropody	☐	☐	☐
Meals on wheels	☐	☐	☐
Laundry	☐	☐	☐
Public transport concessions	☐	☐	☐

Service	You have used	You might use	You think is important
Ring-a-Ride or other voluntary transport services	☐	☐	☐
Help with housework	☐	☐	☐
Help with shopping	☐	☐	☐
House maintenance	☐	☐	☐
Disabled access	☐	☐	☐
Carer support groups	☐	☐	☐
Day Care Centres	☐	☐	☐
Respite care	☐	☐	☐
Welfare rights booklets and other information	☐	☐	☐
DSS benefits for help with community care (Attendance Allowance) or institutional care (Income Support)	☐	☐	☐

☐ When you have completed your list, compare it with that of one or two others.

QUESTIONS

☐ In small groups consider the questions overleaf. Make sure someone jots down some notes to feed back to the main group. These are quite sizeable questions, so it would be a good idea for groups to tackle only one or two different ones.

1 In what ways do the services mentioned in the questionnaire contribute to keeping someone independent and well. How do they need to be improved?

2 Are there any services you would wish to add to these?

3 Pensioners are as varied in their needs as younger people. How do differences of *age, gender, disability, race, income* (and a combination of these) affects the sorts of services individuals need to remain well and independent?

4 What services would you like to see more money spent on and why?

5 Older people have the lowest take-up of benefits. How can they be better informed about these and other services that are available to them?

6 How far is better community care dependent on more money being committed to it?

7 Do you think people should be automatically entitled to particular services (e.g. if they can no longer do their own shopping) or should professionals make decisions about their needs?

8 How available should residential care be? How should it be improved?

9 Does care in the community rely too heavily on families and women? What should be done?

10 The Pensioners' Action research involved asking ordinary people what they thought about services. What are the arguments for consulting people who use services? How might this be more than just a token exercise?

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

☐ Your local social services department is now required to produce a Community Care Plan for the area. Why not invite a speaker from social services to explain your local plan to you. Ask them what procedures they have for consulting service users and for receiving complaints.

☐ Read the sheet entitled *Principles on which care is based* (opposite). How far do you agree with these principles? How far do the services in your area meet these principles? What changes would be needed for them to do so?

Principles on which care is based*

Statement of philosophy and intent

These statements of philosophy and intent, common to service providers in Oxfordshire, are distilled from statements from purchasers, planners and providers, and set the standards against which those who use services, and their families and carers, judge them.

- **All people are full and equal members of society, and have a right to be so treated, irrespective of gender, ethnic origin, cultural background, beliefs, lifestyles or disability.**
- **People receiving health or social services should be seen as whole people, and their concerns or problems addressed in that context.**
- **Services should be delivered in a way that is agreeable and acceptable to individuals and their carers. People should be given the opportunity, where possible, to choose how and when they want services delivered, and they, their families and carers should be encouraged to work in partnership with service providers to achieve this.**
- **Services should be accessible and equitable, and as comprehensive as possible. Where priorities have to be set, services should be targeted on those in most need. Needs should be reviewed regularly.**
- **All services should be of the highest quality, underpinned by training and monitoring systems. They should be aimed at meeting each individual's right to maximum physical, mental and emotional well being.**
- **Services and treatments should be designed to promote independence. They should be aimed at allowing people to live at home as far as possible, and at ensuring that stays in hospital are as short as possible, bearing in mind the need for adequate aftercare and rehabilitation.**
- **In some cases residential care, nursing care or sheltered housing may be the right and preferred option.**
- **People should be party to and able to influence decisions about their lives. They should be encouraged to make their views known, and if necessary, given help to make their contribution or to communicate. Services need to be sensitive to people whose first language is not English, or who communicate through signing. Some people may need the active support of advocates to help them make their wishes known. People have a right to refuse services, unless there are legal restrictions. People should be encouraged if they wish to complain, and given help to make sure that their complaint is properly heard and taken into account.**
- **Children have a right to protection and their needs should be paramount. Most children will have their needs best met in families, except where that is not possible or clearly against their interests. Children have a right to be listened to and their views taken fully into account. Children should not be admitted to hospital except where necessary.**
- **Needs of carers and families may differ from the needs of an individual being offered services. These differences should be respected and taken into account. It is recognised that social workers and other care staff may not be able to satisfy needs which are mutually exclusive.**

* Oxfordshire County Council, *Community Care Plan*, 1992

Activity 5 **Speaking Up**

WHAT'S THE POINT?

- 'What's the point of complaining, you never get anywhere?'
- 'Nobody ever listens to me.'
- 'They don't really care about people like us.'

These grumbles are understandable faced as we very often are with large bureaucracies and seemingly incomprehensible systems.

However, think of this:

- If you don't speak out, people who organise and run services won't know that you find what they offer to be inadequate or misplaced.
- You will have no chance of getting better service yourself.
- You may be letting other people down who have a similar problem to you.
- Nothing will change - or if it does, it won't necessarily be for the better.

People do take note of what you have to say:

'Councillors stand for elections because they believe that they can improve services, so it's very important for them to know how people feel. It's hard to keep in touch with everything so comments from users of services, like Education, Social Services and Housing, are vital in helping them to do their job properly.'

Eva Barnes, County Councillor, Oxfordshire County Council

YOUR EXPERIENCES

- ☐ In your group, find examples of things you have in the past complained about. What did you complain about? How did you go about it? How successful were you?

- ☐ Find other examples of times when you would have liked to complain about local services, but didn't. Find out *why* you didn't complain.

- ☐ In pairs, or as a large group, consider how best to go about making your voices individually and collectively heard.

When you have completed this, compare your ideas with those that follow.

BEING HEARD

There are better and worse ways to go about making your voice heard. Certain ways are not going to get you very far and others may not be appropriate.

Worse ways

- Moaning and grumbling to friends and taking it no further.

- Bawling out a receptionist.

- Taking the law into your own hands.

Can you think of other examples?

Better ways

(a) *Try to get advice.* You may have a local Citizens' Advice Bureau or advice centre. Local helplines or telephone advice services might exist - social services, the library, Age Concern and Help the Aged might know about these. If it is a case of maladministration the local ombudsman might be able to help. The library will have the address of the ombudsman's office.

(b) *Contact the local authority* if your complaint is about a council service. Councils have leaflets informing you about how to take up your complaint.

(c) *Find out what stages are involved* in pursuing a complaint. You don't want to go straight to the top if you can get satisfaction from tackling the problem lower down.

(d) *Use a pleasant but firm tone* in your letters, phone calls, conversations. Don't get angry, but don't be walked over either. Have a clear idea of what you want as a remedy and pursue it.

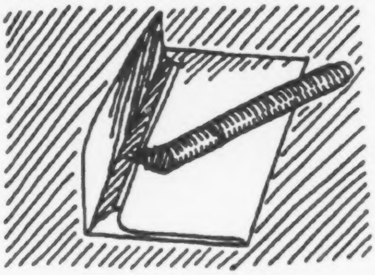
(e) *Try and find a supportive friend*, welfare rights worker or other professional, especially if it is a complicated or upsetting process.

(f) *If the problem affects several of you, work closely together.* Agree on ground-rules, guiding how you will work together - you won't want one person making a decision without consulting the group, for instance.

(g) *Remember that you do have local councillors.* County, city, district, and parish councils are responsible for different services, and councillors themselves may sit on different committees (planning, finance, highways, etc.), so find out which councillors will be more useful to you. The library or council offices will have this information. Councillors usually hold surgeries and are available at home for you to phone.

(h) *Your local MP will also hold a surgery.* Find out dates and times from the local press or library. MPs also do take note of their post bag. Your letter might give them the ammunition they need in a public debate.

(i) *Try writing to the press.* If you want to complain more publicly about issues with a more general application, e.g. closure of old people's homes, your letter probably stands more chance of being printed than you think.



Note: Complaining is a very important part of our lives as citizens in a society that often fails to meet what people really need. It is about communicating our displeasure at the services we sometimes get with the intention of improving them for ourselves and others. It is about rights and dignity. It is therefore not a waste of time, but a very important activity!

6

RAISING THE ISSUES

The group you are working with are likely to have concerns and interests relating to current events or changes taking place which affect, in some way, their lives. They may have strong views on what should be done about something, locally, nationally or internationally. They may want to know what they could do to influence policy making in these areas.

The purpose of this section is to allow the group to explore issues in greater depth in a variety of ways.

Guidance for Group Leaders

It is a good idea to find out well in advance what the group would like to discuss so that you have plenty of time to find materials or book a speaker.

WARM-UP

Begin by encouraging people to think and talk about issues of concern to them, using the Warm-Up sheet.

ACTIVITIES

If the group cannot decide on a topic then it is suggested you tackle the two issues explored in the pack, which are:

Activity 1 **Caring**

Activity 2 **Crime and Older People**

Each of these should take about *45 minutes to an hour* to discuss.

If you would rather consider an issue chosen by the group you will need to do some advance planning.

Find out about four or five weeks in advance what topic the group would like to consider and whether it is likely that there will be enough available material on it.

Use the guidelines *Facing the Issues* (p. 84) to help you tackle the chosen topic. The group, individually or in pairs, may be willing to do some advance work such as acquiring materials, finding figures, scanning local and national newspapers and so on.

Remind the group that they will not always agree with each other about causes and solutions. They will need to be tolerant of each other's opinions, and in that way the discussion will be richer.

There are different ways in which you can bring out differences of view and hence promote a better understanding of different sides of a question. For instance:

Debates. Divide the group into two, each appointing a group leader. Ask the first group to think up as many arguments as they can FOR an issue and the second group to consider arguments AGAINST, for example, increasing taxes, charging for visits to GPs, capital punishment, etc. Then ask each group leader in turn to explain the arguments. Follow this with a general discussion.

Different viewpoints. As the group, in pairs, to take on the role of different participants in an incident or issue and explain how things look from their viewpoint: what the causes are, what should be done, and so on. For example, in considering joy riding, take the parts of the police, joy riders, social workers, the *Sun* newspaper, parents, affected residents, etc.

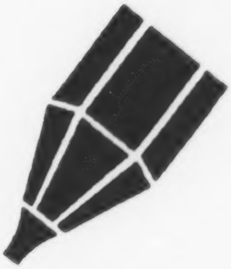
FOLLOW-UP

If a discussion goes particularly well it might be rewarding to find a speaker who could give you more information or offer a particular viewpoint (see *Organising a Speaker*, p. 85).

Find out if the group would like to try the television soaps Activity (*Activity 3*). If they would, you need to decide a date two or three weeks ahead of time for the feedback session.

CONCLUSION

It often happens that issues seem so large and our influence so small that we come away from discussions feeling powerless. Use *Activity 4*, **What Can I Do About It?**, to encourage people to talk about successes they have had in making an impact on events.



RESOURCES

Local

- Use your **local and county libraries** to find information. Explain to the staff what you are searching for and they will give you a great deal of informed help.
- Many towns have **information centres** which hold records of different groups operating in your area.

- Use your phone book to find the local offices of **Help the Aged** and **Age Concern**.

- Try your **local government offices** for information and materials about local government services. **Social services** is a very useful source of information.

- The **Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)** has information about people's rights. The key reference book used is often in local libraries and is called *CANS*.

- Try also local **welfare rights centres** for information on benefits and rights - addresses should be in the phone book or available from libraries or social services.

National

- Use *Whitaker's Almanack*, available in most libraries, for addresses of institutions like **Shelter**, **Age Concern**, **trade unions**, **government organisations**, **embassies**, etc.

- Contact the **Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys**, St. Catherine's House, 10 Kingsway, London WC2B 6JP, **telephone 071 242 0262**, for government figures on a huge range of matters.

- Find the easy-to-follow government publication, *Social Trends*, in most libraries for figures on education, health, housing, work, crime, etc.

- Write for a list of publications to the **Centre for Policy on Ageing**, 25-31 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QP.

- **Age Concern** produces many free leaflets and a publication list - available from Age Concern, 60 Pitcairn Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3LL.

- **Help the Aged** also produces excellent publications and leaflets, available from St. James' Walk, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R OBE.

Warm-Up

FACING THE ISSUES

Spend a few minutes in pairs thinking about which issues, under the headings below, are of concern to you. You do not have to use the examples given - just think of ONE issue that is happening locally that concerns you today.

After a few minutes, share your ideas in the group.

- ☐ **Think of ONE issue each that concerns you LOCALLY**

  e.g. traffic, joy riding, cuts in services

- ☐ **Think of ONE issue that affects you PERSONALLY**

  e.g. pensions, caring, housing

- ☐ **Think of ONE issue in the news at the moment that you feel strongly about**

- ☐ **If there was ONE change you could make in the world, what would it be?**

  e.g. end world hunger, make people more tolerant, governments to give more attention to the needs of older people

Activities

Activity 1 **Caring**

A carer is a person looking after a dependent, disabled or elderly person.

This Activity aims to explore the implications of caring, for carers, and what can be done to help them.

Some Facts and Figures

What is the extent of care for disabled people in this country? Compare your guestimates to the answers at the foot of the following page.

1 *How many adults in Britain are disabled, sufficient to need 'exceptional care', both at home and in institutions?*

500,000   1,000,000   1,500,000

2 *How many carers are there?*

1m   2m   4m   6m   8m

3 *What age are the majority of carers?*

20-35   35-44   45-64   65-80

4 *What percentage of carers are women?*

20%   40%   60%   80%

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Are you, or have you ever been, a carer?
- Why are the majority of carers likely to be women?
- If the majority of carers are aged between 45-64, what stage of their lives is being affected?

- How does caring affect carers' lives?
- Do you think carers get enough support? If not, what sort of support do you think they need?
- Many people care for relatives at home because they do not want to put them into a home or other institution. What would a residential institution have to be like for you to consider it a real alternative to caring at home?

EILEEN'S EXPERIENCE

Begin by reading the article *She's My Lifeline* (p. 80).

As a group consider the issues that are raised by Eileen's experience, for example:

- Is society reasonable in making these demands on someone?
- What sorts of demands does Eileen face on a day-to-day basis?
- How would you feel about needing to be cared for? How can this happen with dignity?
- Why are so many people in a similar position to Eileen?
- What do you think should be done about it?

ACTION

A charter of carers' needs, *Carers' Needs - A 10 Point Plan* (p. 81), has been drawn up by the National Carers' Association (29 Chilworth Mews, London W2 3RG).

☐ Consider how the charter's different points might be achieved, perhaps working in pairs with each pair tackling one or two of the points.

☐ Still working in pairs, draw up a charter from the point of view of the person being cared for. What sorts of state provision ought we to be able to expect if we are/become dependent? How far should we be expected to rely on relatives?

Answers (1) 1,500,000 (2) 6m (3) 45-64 (4) 60%

(Figures from Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys, 1990.)

☐ End with a whole group discussion. Is any picture emerging of the type of provision that would benefit both carers and the cared for? How could it be implemented?

Activity 2 Crime and Older People

THE FACTS

Elderly people are more likely to be victims of crime

True or false? Give reasons for your answer

The facts are:

☐ Households headed by younger or middle-aged people are about 30 per cent more likely to be victims of crime than people not in work, such as retired people.

☐ In 1990, 6.9 per cent of under 30s were victims of street crime; 2.3 per cent of 30s to 60s; and 1.5 per cent of over 60s; young people were therefore more at risk.

☐ When particular groups are scrutinised, e.g. widowed females, crime rates against them are very low even when taking into account that they may spend less time outside the home.

However, crime rates are higher generally for street crime and burglary in inner-city and high-crime areas.

So, the answer to the question is, *false*: elderly people are actually *less* likely to be victims of crime.

FEAR OF CRIME

Elderly people, however, have the greatest *fear* of becoming victims of crime. The following are some of the reasons why this might be so. In pairs discuss these explanations and consider which ones you agree with. You might wish to add to the list.

☐ Lurid stories in the press.

☐ Feelings of vulnerability due to frailty.

☐ A general belief that elderly people are more often victims.

☐ The physical consequences of a push or shove (etc.) are much greater.

☐ The consequences of a burglary are much greater if you are on a low income - which many elderly people are - and possibly uninsured.

☐ Elderly people very often live alone.

☐ The heavy marketing of locks and other security devices can make people feel more alarmed.

☐ In some parts of Britain elderly people are more vulnerable than in other parts.

☐ Many elderly people are women and/or black - this makes them more vulnerable, regardless of age.

The effects of such fears

Consider which of the following you agree with. Can you add to the list?

- Self-imposed curfew; many elderly people will not go out at night.
- Stress and anxiety.
- Fear of strangers.
- Elderly people seem more frail and vulnerable than they are.

What could be done to reduce these fears
Tick any of these proposals you agree with. Can you add any others?

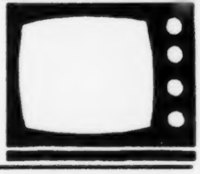
✔

☐ Better design of flats, council houses, etc.

- ☐ More patrolling of streets considered vulnerable.
- ☐ Better street lighting.
- ☐ More liaison between police and elderly people so they can find out what people's fears are and what they would like done to make them feel safer.
- ☐ Careful siting of elderly people's facilities.
- ☐ Particular focus on high-risk areas.
- ☐ Increase the number of telephones in homes and public places.
- ☐ More Neighbourhood Watch schemes, especially in low-income areas.
- ☐ More crime prevention.
- ☐ Talks by the police to lunch clubs etc.
- ☐ More community policing, e.g. the bobby on the bike.

USEFUL READING
Eric Midwinter, *The Old Order: Crime and Older People* Centre, for Policy on Ageing in association with Help the Aged, 1990.

Activity 3 **Watching the Soaps**



Soaps such as *EastEnders*, *Coronation Street*, or *Brookside* provide some of the best drama on television.

Many of them set out to tackle topical issues such as homelessness, Aids, relationship problems, racial and sexual inequalities, etc.

By following one of the soaps that do tackle issues it is often possible to gain a better insight into the complexity of such issues and to understand them better.

- ☐ Either individually or in pairs, decide which soap you will follow for two or three weeks. It can be one you already watch or a different one.

☐ Try and ensure that the group covers two or three different ones in total.

☐ Agree to report back in two or three weeks time.

☐ Use the *question sheet* (pp. 82-3) to help you think about the programme you have agreed to watch. Compare notes with your partner. You do not have to agree with each other - it's probably more interesting if you don't!

REPORTING BACK

☐ After two or three weeks, use the sheets you have filled in to help you talk about what you have been watching.

☐ Outline to the group which issues were dealt with and how. Comment on how well you think the issues were handled, e.g. did the programme explore the issues through looking at different viewpoints; did it widen your understanding of the issues?

☐ Would you recommend the programme to others?

Activity 4 **What Can I Do About It?**

We often feel helpless in the face of large events or great suffering. 'What can I do about it?' we often say and try to turn away.

However, there are many things which we can do to make our voice heard.

As individuals

☐ Write a letter to a local or national newspaper.

☐ Donate money.

☐ Arrange to see a local councillor, perhaps at a surgery (ring the local council offices to find out the names of your councillors and how to contact them).

☐ Write to your Member of Parliament at the House of Commons or at home.

☐ Join a relevant organisation campaigning for change (addresses in the library or information centre).

- ☐ Read up on the issues so you are better informed - all the better to influence others.

- ☐ Start a self-help group; get support in doing this from your health visitor, the social services department, community education centre, your local neighbourhood centre, etc. Raise the issue at any meetings you go to or with friends.

As a group

- ☐ Become better informed; seek more information; organise a speaker.

- ☐ Invite a councillor, official, or representative of a relevant organisation to a meeting to answer your questions and concerns.

- ☐ Organise fund-raising activities.

- ☐ Take a stall at a local market, community action day, etc.

- ☐ Make contact with any other organisations locally or nationally and find out what they are doing and how you can help.

- ☐ Lobby your local councillor or Member of Parliament. Arrange a group visit and let them know your views. Invite the press.

- ☐ Develop some publicity such as letters, posters, leaflets, and send it to key people.

- ☐ Organise a public meeting or demonstration.

Discussion

- Tick which of the above you have ever done. Are there any activities not included?

- In small groups of 3-4, discuss what you have done and how effective it has been.

- Ask one person from each small group to feed back some of the experiences of the small group.

- Have a general discussion about the most effective ways of getting heard.

Activity 1 handout

'SHE'S MY LIFELINE'

Eileen Allen is a remarkable woman, yet there are thousands just like her: she cares for a group of elderly relatives. *40 Minutes* tells her story

If I'm in a jam, Eileen will help out. She's a wonderful person, a pillar of strength. She's so uncomplaining, I can call her any time.' Eileen Allen is her 87–year old cousin Edna's link with the outside world. But Eileen's responsibilities don't stop there, for she is a lifeline and pillar of strength not only to Edna, but to five other elderly relatives, too. No wonder there are times, she says, 'when I'm so fed up, I think I'll emigrate and leave no forwarding address'.

Since her husband died, 63-year-old Eileen, who is featured in this week's *40 minutes*, has had to cope with the six of them on her own. Demanding, argumentative, temperamental, frequently in poor health, they clearly need her. Eileen is one of thousands of people, usually women, who look after elderly friends or relatives, helping them keep their independence and dignity a little longer, because, 'well, if there's no one else, you can't just say no, can you?'

It began with her mother-in-law, Melinda. 'She is most unreasonably demanding, but I do it because of my husband. I have nothing in common with her, but I do it because Ernest would want me to.' The others – her 92-year-old mother, Ivy, her Aunt Rene and her three octogenarian cousins, Edna, Nelly and Rene – as Eileen puts it, 'fell by the wayside and appealed to me'.

There are other cousins who could help with the visits, shopping and general errands (all live close to Eileen's home in Rotherham) 'but they don't seem to want to know'. Eileen excuses her two sisters because one lives too far away and the other can't drive. Other relatives do what they can but have demanding families of their own. Eileen, aged 63, has no children. She says of the women she cares for: 'I know they would be terribly hurt if I turned my back on them.'

All the women agree that Eileen is marvellous. The trouble is they are all dependent on her. While recognising that Eileen has her own life to lead and they are lucky to have her, they each privately consider their problems and situation to be the most important. And there's the tacit understanding that it's family duty. 'It was taken for granted that children looked after parents when they were old and couldn't cope,' explains Edna. 'Yes, I think it's still true. If parents brought up and supported you, then you should support them.' But, two or three generations ago, families typically lived in the same street. Also, lacking modern medicine (particularly in the pit communities of South Yorkshire), it would be unusual for so many in one family to live to such an age.

Bright, breezy, cheerful, efficient, capable, generous-hearted, Eileen brings a humorous touch to her old ladies' lives.

'One of the last things I want the old ladies to think is that I'm complaining, because I'm not,' she insists. 'I'm just one of many.'

HELEN PICKLES

The Carers' National Association, 29
Chilworth Mews, London W2 3RG.
Telephone: 071–724 7776

Radio Times, 3-9 November 1991.

Activity 1 handout

Carers' Needs

A 10 point plan for carers

Carers are people who are looking after elderly, ill or disabled relatives or friends who cannot manage at home without help. They may be the parents of a child with a mental handicap, a husband whose wife has a physical disability or a daughter looking after her frail elderly mother.

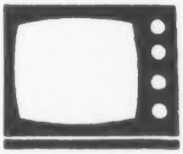
Carers come from all racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Their circumstances vary enormously, with the severity of the condition of the person cared for, their economic circumstances and the overall help and support available. The majority of carers are women and many carry out the tasks of caring completely on their own.

Carers are deeply concerned about the needs of the people they care for; services need to be planned for and with them.

CARERS NEED:

1. **Recognition of their contribution** and of their own needs as individuals in their own right
2. **Services tailored to their individual circumstances,** needs and views, through discussions at the time help is being planned
3. **Services which reflect an awareness of differing racial, cultural and religious backgrounds** and values, equally accessible to carers of every race and ethnic origin
4. **Opportunities for a break,** both for short spells (an afternoon) and for longer periods (a week or more), to relax and have time to themselves
5. **Practical help** to lighten the tasks of caring, including domestic help, home adaptations, incontinence services and help with transport
6. **Someone to talk to** about their own emotional needs, at the outset of caring, while they are caring and when the caring task is over
7. **Information** about available benefits and services as well as how to cope with the particular condition of the person cared for
8. **An income which covers the costs of caring** and which does not preclude carers taking employment or sharing care with other people
9. **Opportunities to explore alternatives to family care,** both for the immediate and long-term future
10. **Services designed through consultation** with carers, at all levels of policy planning

Activity 3 question sheet



WATCHING THE SOAPS

Name of programme

How often is it on each week?

Where is it set?

What sorts of people is it about?

What particular issues are currently being portrayed in the programme?

Do these stories focus on matters that are of wider social interest? e.g. unemployment, marital breakdown

Give an example of how one issue is being dealt with

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the way in which this issue is being dealt with?

Overall, what do you think are the strong points about this series, and what are its weaknesses or limitations?

Discussion guidelines

FACING THE ISSUES

As a group you might be concerned with a particular issue of local, national or international concern, e.g. pensions, homelessness, cuts in services, famine, etc.

Before approaching a controversial issue you need to bear in mind:

- **that you will not all agree with each other and will need to be tolerant of different views**
- **that by listening to different views you will get a much clearer idea of the issues**
- **that you cannot believe everything you read in the newspapers or watch on television!**

One way of approaching an issue or problem is by asking certain key questions.

ONE **What is the problem or issue?**

- Do people agree or disagree about what the issues are?
- If so, what evidence are they using to support their viewpoint?
- How reliable is the evidence?
- What is the extent of the problem?
- Who is being affected?

TWO **Effects: what are the consequences for those affected?**

- Who are the winners and who are the losers?
- What is the experience of, for example, being unemployed, homeless, sharing a room in a residential home, winning the pools?
- What are the wider consequences, e.g. for the family, for the economy, for society?

THREE **Causes: what are the reasons for what is happening?**

- What different viewpoints are there?
- What is the evidence used to support different viewpoints?
- What are your views on causes and what evidence do you have to support them?

FOUR **Action: what should be done?**

- What action do different individuals or groups think should be taken?
- What would be the effects of different sorts of action?
- Who would benefit and who would lose?
- Would the problem be solved?

Follow Up sheet

ORGANISING A SPEAKER

One way of becoming better informed about an issue is to get a speaker from a relevant organisation. It is worth following the guidelines below to ensure this is a valuable exercise.

Guidelines

1 Find out from the library or local information centre which groups exist locally that have an expertise in the area that you want.

2 Contact the organisation by phone or letter and ask if they offer speakers and whether there is a charge.

3 Write to the organisation and let them know:

☐ Who they would be coming to speak to.

☐ What you would like them to speak on.

☐ How long you would like them to speak and how long will be allocated for discussion.

☐ Whether you want them to bring any visual materials, e.g. video, slides, etc.

You could also ask whether they have any information leaflets which would give you some background information before the talk.

4 Confirm the details of the date/time/venue/format with the speaker before the talk is due.

5 Make sure you have the right equipment, that the room is booked, that you have chosen someone to chair the session, and any other details, before the event.

6 Get the group to think of questions to ask in advance.

7 Make sure someone welcomes the speaker and introduces them to the group - find out how they want to be introduced. Introduce the group to the speaker.

8 Ensure the chair knows the planned outlines of times for the talk and discussion.

9 Make sure the speaker is publicly thanked at the end.

10 After the talk:

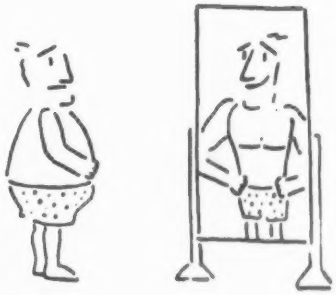
☐ Write to thank the speaker.

☐ Ask the group what they thought of the speaker's presentation, the information they received and the value of the discussion - did they feel sufficiently involved?

☐ Consider whether the meeting could be followed up with other activities or action associated with the talk.

7
HEALTH

Everyone has some ideas or concerns about health. As we get older we are all aware of physical changes. Some are small things such as stiff joints or slowing down a bit, others are things that affect us more such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and strokes, etc. But there are other aspects of our lives that contribute to our health and this section should provide you with ideas about health and what you can do as an individual and as a group.



Guidance for Group Leaders

WARM-UP

Introduce the subject by encouraging members of the group to think about their own health. Are they happy with the health care that they or their families have received during their lives? How has health provision altered? What is good health? Give out the Warm-Up sheet the session before you plan to start.

ACTIVITIES

The Activities cover three sessions and can be used in sequence or as a one-off. They are:

Activity 1 **Health and Wellbeing - what makes us healthy?**

Activity 2 **The National Health Service**

Activity 3 **Health Action**

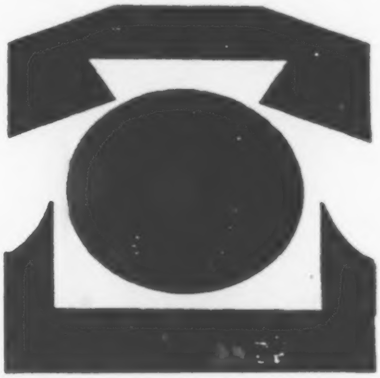
FOLLOW-UP

☐ Link your ideas from Activity 1 with Activity 3. Your health visitor or GP might be able to make suggestions, or try your local Community Health Council.

☐ Keep the group up to date with changes to the health system and discuss how people feel about them. For example, most dentists are now refusing to treat new and sometimes existing NHS patients - what do *you* think, what can *you* do about it?

RESOURCES

You will find most of these services in your area, and will be able to obtain their addresses and telephone numbers from the telephone book or library. They will be able to help with your personal health queries or requirements, as well as being good sources of information for the Activity sessions.



Community Health Council

Social Services (Services for the Elderly)

Community Recreation

Health Visitors

Council for Voluntary Action

British Red Cross

Carers' Unit

Health Helpline

Warm-Up

HEALTH

Think about the following points before you start your session(s) on health.

A space has been left below each question for you to use for making a few notes if you feel like doing so. (Your notes are for your use only: there are no right or wrong answers.)

- **What is health?**

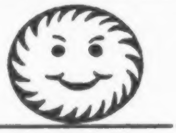
- **Do you think that there are things which you can do to improve your health or look after yourself without using the medical profession?**

- **What do you think of this country's health service?**

Bring this sheet and any notes you have made to the session(s) on health

Activities

Activity 1 **Health and Wellbeing**



☐ Go round the group, each person saying briefly what they understand by the word *health*.

☐ Because the term *health* can mean merely the absence of illness a wider term, *wellbeing*, is used here to describe the positive state of feeling well about yourself and life in general.

☐ In pairs tick any of the headings that you think improve people's wellbeing, health and quality of life. Underline any that you think numbers of people miss out on.

1. Feeling fit
2. Being independent
3. Income
4. Work
5. Housing
6. Diet
7. Local Authority services
8. Health services
9. Being part of a family/feeling involved in your community

✓

✏

☐ Report back on each pair's ideas, then discuss what could be done to improve the health and wellbeing of *(a)* elderly people *(b)* people on low incomes.

☐ Could your group do anything to bring about any of the improvements you have discussed?

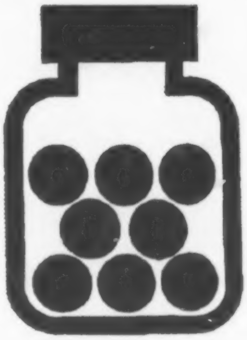
Activity 2 **What Is the National Health Service and What Is Happening to It?**

The health service in Britain was established in 1948 by a Labour Government to provide free health care on the basis of need.

The aim of this session is to find out how far the health service has altered health care during your lifetime.

☐ Discuss the following in small groups:

- What was health care like in your childhood?
- Who did you turn to for health advice?
- Could you get a doctor if you needed one?
- Did you have to pay?
- Who delivered babies?
- What sorts of illnesses were common and how were they treated?
- Did people you know suffer or die from lack of treatment or inadequate treatment?



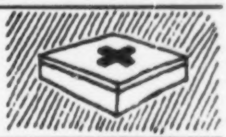
☐ How does this compare with the provision you get now?

Spend about *5 minutes* studying Figure 1 on health service provision. Based on your experiences, as a group:

☐ List all the services you have received from the NHS.

☐ List and discuss how you think the recent changes will affect patients and staff in the NHS and the provision of services.

Activity 3 **Health Action**



What can people do for themselves?

☐ Use the *Personal Health Profile* (see p.95). Let the group choose whether to use it for themselves at home or as a group activity, and discuss what action they could take to improve their own health in the light of the profile.

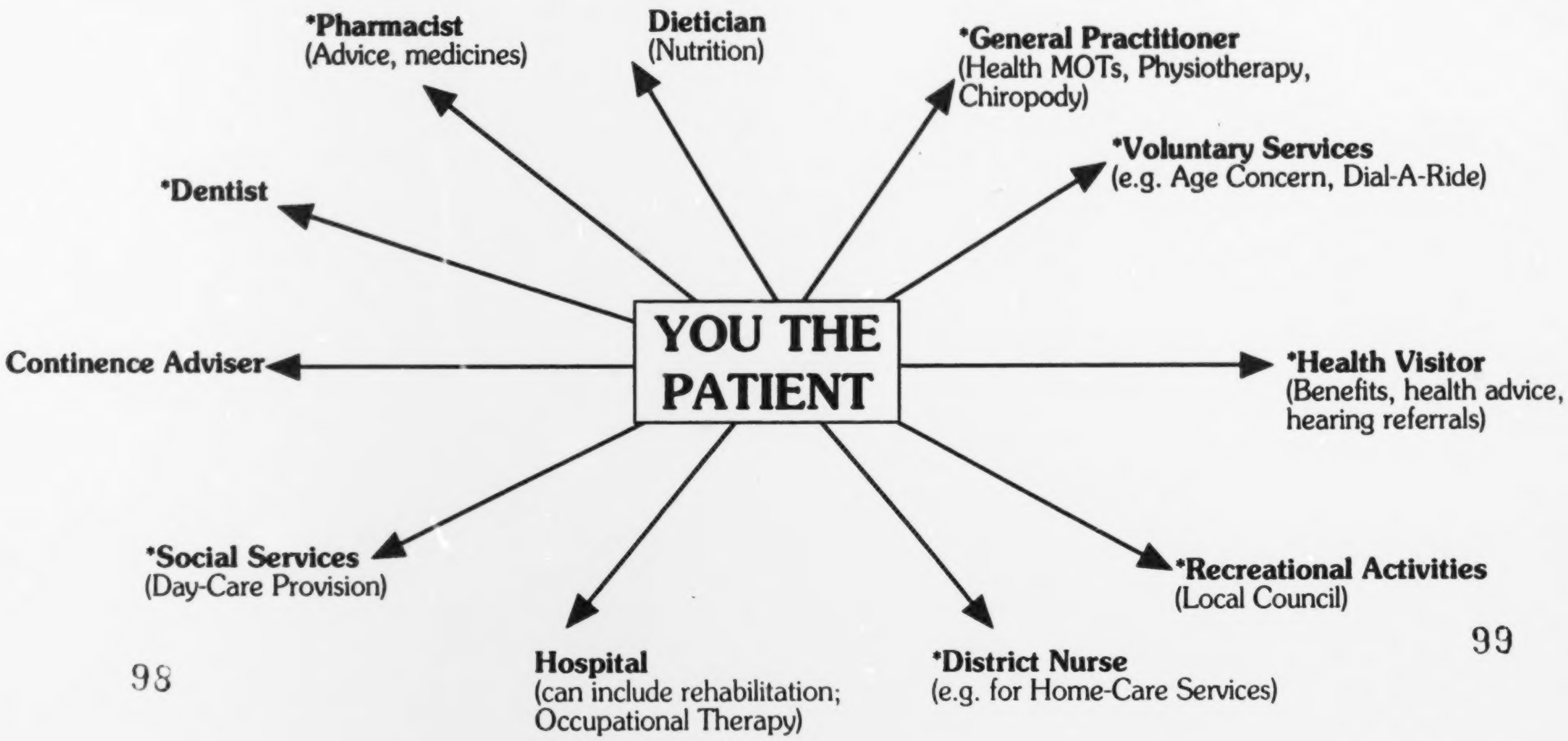
What can the group do?

☐ This is an opportunity to develop any of the points raised in earlier sessions. Does the group feel strongly about any aspects of health provision? If so, the group might like to send their views to the relevant body/organisation (see Figure 2) or perhaps arrange a visit from a local councillor(s) or MP.

☐ Some pensioners' clubs/groups have regular visits (e.g. monthly) from a health visitor to discuss problems or get advice and information. (See *Organising a Speaker* in the section **Raising the Issues**.)

☐ Another possibility is to organise some information sessions, e.g. on diabetes, strokes or heart attacks or on what to do in an emergency - would *you* know what to do if someone collapsed during your group session? Contact the health visitor for your area and arrange a session!

FIGURE 1 HEALTH, SOCIAL, AND RECREATION SERVICES



YOU THE PATIENT

***Pharmacist**
(Advice, medicines)

Dietician
(Nutrition)

***General Practitioner**
(Health MOTs, Physiotherapy, Chiropody)

***Voluntary Services**
(e.g. Age Concern, Dial-A-Ride)

***Dentist**

Continence Adviser

***Health Visitor**
(Benefits, health advice, hearing referrals)

***Social Services**
(Day-Care Provision)

***Recreational Activities**
(Local Council)

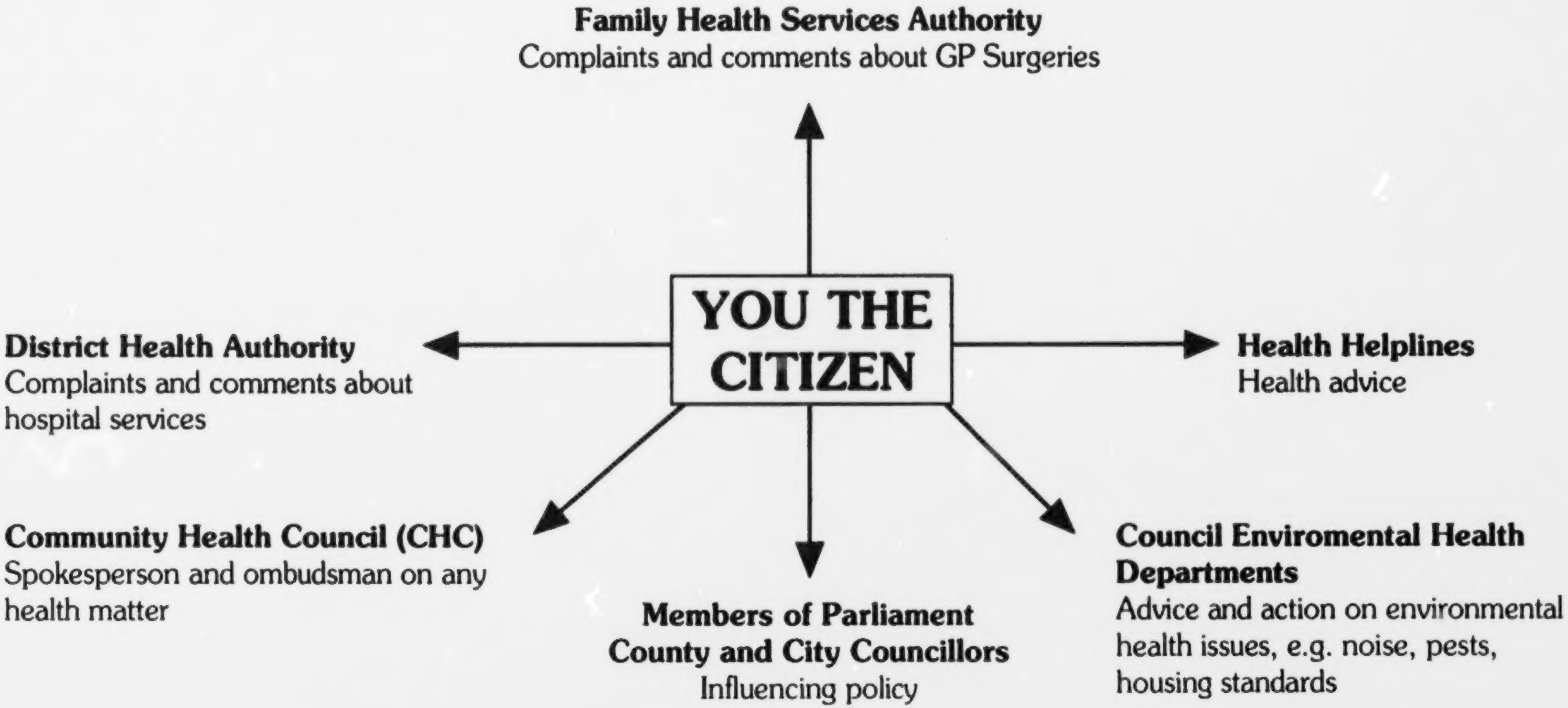
Hospital
(can include rehabilitation; Occupational Therapy)

***District Nurse**
(e.g. for Home-Care Services)

* You may contact these services direct

Activity 3 handout

FIGURE 2 HEALTH ACTION: WHOM TO CONTACT



YOU THE CITIZEN

Family Health Services Authority
Complaints and comments about GP Surgeries

District Health Authority
Complaints and comments about hospital services

Health Helplines
Health advice

Community Health Council (CHC)
Spokesperson and ombudsman on any health matter

Members of Parliament
County and City Councillors
Influencing policy

Council Enviromental Health Departments
Advice and action on environmental health issues, e.g. noise, pests, housing standards

You local library or information centre will be able to supply you with addresses and telephone numbers for your area

Activity 3 handout

PERSONAL HEALTH PROFILE

Comment	Action
DIET A good diet gives energy and prevents illness.	
DENTAL CARE Good mouth care benefits older people who have their own teeth as well as those with dentures. Regular brushing is essential.	
FOOTCARE Look after your feet, they will last you a lifetime.	
HEARING Hearing properly keeps you in touch with the outside world.	
MOBILITY Whatever your age you can improve your FITNESS – remember it is easier to maintain than regain.	
CONTINENCE Incontinence affects 1 in 4 women and in 1 in 10 men. Help is available if you have this problem.	
LEISURE/RECREATION Keeps you fit in mind and body.	103
102 **HEALTH INFORMATION** Help yourself to health – do you know where to go?	

Acknowledgement Shirley Bough, Senior Nurse Health Visitor, East Oxford Health Centre.

8

READING FOR PLEASURE

The pleasure of reading poems and short stories can be enhanced by discussing them with others.

This can be done very informally by just choosing a poem or story, reading it, and talking about it.

If you want to develop your discussion along more structured lines, you can look also at how the *way* in which a piece is written contributes to its meaning.

Guidance for Group Leaders

ACTIVITIES
Activities 1 and *2* help you to look in detail at two poems.

Activities 3 and *4* suggest ways of structuring a discussion about any poem or short story which you choose.

Activity 5 is a short story by Toni Cade Bambara about a poor young girl and her birthday.

Activity 6 takes a look at some poetry from abroad, from the troubled country of South Africa.

Activity 7 is a poem full of imagery, *Metaphors* by Sylvia Plath.

RESOURCES
The local library will have collections of short stories and poems.

Look out for anthologies, which are collections of work by different writers.

Activities

Activity 1 **Two Poems**

Digging, by Seamus Heaney, and *Two Hands*, by Jon Stallworthy

FIRST READINGS

☐ Ask a volunteer to read the poem *Digging* aloud.

☐ Then everyone read it silently to themselves, marking anything puzzling, surprising or interesting.

☐ Each person briefly write down what, from these first readings, they think the poem is about.

Allow approximately *10 minutes* for all this.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

☐ Divide into smaller groups and discuss the poem in more detail. Use the questions below as guidelines.

Verses 1 & 2	Where is the writer and what is he doing?
	Why has the poet put **'I look down'** at the end of the line (line 5), with no comma, so that it leads straight into verse 3 without a pause?
	Could **'look down'** have another (metaphorical) meaning as well as the literal one of looking out of the window?
Verse 3	What happens in this verse?
Verse 4	What is the poet remembering in this verse?
Verse 5	What do these two lines, which start with the ringing exclamation **'By God'**, tell us about the poet's feelings about his father?
Verse 6 & 7	What do these two verses tell us?

Verse 7 Look at lines 23-24:

> **'going down and down**
> **For the good turf, Digging.'**

Think about how the concrete image of the grandfather cutting turf corresponds with what is going on in the poet's mind as he delves into his memory.

Verse 8 What is the poet saying in this verse?

Verse 9 What is he saying in this verse? What feeling is conveyed?

Notice the effect of the repetition of:

> **'Between my finger and my thumb**
> **The squat pen rests.'**

In the first verse this is followed by **'snug as a gun'** and in the last verse by **'I'll dig with it'**. Both these lines have the same number of stresses (four): **snug-as- a- gun-/ I'll- dig- with- it-**.

We can't help but recall the first verse when we read the last - it's as if the poet has gone full circle in his mind. After re-experiencing and recording the admiration he felt for his father and grandfather in their real 'men's work', he asserts that words, too, can have power and potency, that his work as a poet is real work too.

☐ Now look at what you wrote when you first read the poem. Share these jottings if you like. Are they similar to how you understand the poem now after looking at it more closely and discussing it?

LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE

Thinking about *how* the poem is written - its language and its structure - can enhance our responses and our understanding of its meaning. Written out as prose, for example, the same words wouldn't call forth the same response from us at all.

As the whole group, or in small groups if you wish, use the following guidelines to look at the language and structure of *Digging*.

☐ It has been said that: 'Seamus Heaney's poetry sounds as if he's writing it with his mouth full of earth'. Discuss!

or

Pick out the words and phrases which convey the *physical* reality of the labourer's life (smell, sight, taste, sound, touch, including the sense of movement and effort).

☐ Think about what words and phrases Heaney uses to convey his sense of admiration for, and pride in, his forebears.

☐ Look at the poem's structure. It doesn't rhyme much, and although it is divided into verses it is quite near to natural speech. What effect does this have on us? Does it match the theme?

Finally, does the poem move or convince you and do you like it?

Allow approximately *45 minutes* for these last two sections.

TAKE A TEA BREAK?

ANOTHER POET

For the second half of the session read the second poem, *Two Hands* by Jon Stallworthy, and contrast it with *Digging* in terms of the feelings, tone, language, and structure.

Jon Stallworthy is a poet who lives in Oxford. His father was a doctor, a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

☐ Someone read the poem *Two Hands* aloud to the group.

☐ Then everyone read it silently to themselves, noting and marking any similarities and differences between this and the previous poem.

Allow *5-10 minutes* for this.

DISCUSSION

☐ How is the poem similar to *Digging*?

☐ How is it different in the feelings it conveys, the tone and the use of language? Are there any similarities or differences in the structure of the two poems?

☐ Which do you prefer and why?

Allow approximately *30 minutes* for this.

OPTIONAL TASK

In class if time, or at home to read out next time, write a poem yourself about a parent or grandparent.

Activity 2 Poem

Far and High (The first song they learnt) by Amryl Johnson

☐ Read the poem aloud

☐ Read the poem silently to yourselves

☐ What is the poem about?

DISCUSSION

- What are the contradictions in the poem?
- What is the effect of there being no punctuation?
- What is the tone of the poem?
- What is the effect of the last line?

Activity 3 How to Read a Poem

The suggestions here are intended as guidelines for reading and discussing a poem(s) chosen by the group, but don't feel you have to stick to them rigidly. Try to leave a few minutes at the end of the session to summarise your discussion.

☐ Read the poem through once and jot down your first response to it - any words that come to mind, sad, funny, warm, earthy, bitter, etc. - and what you think it is about.

☐ Now read it through again more slowly. Mark anything striking, surprising, or puzzling. Let the poem 'speak to you' and set off memories, associations of your own.

Now you are ready to discuss it. Share your first responses; look up in a dictionary or ask about words you don't understand.

Then go through the poem bit by bit answering the following questions:

- What does this poem convey to me, the reader?
- How does the poet get his/her meaning across to me?
- By words? which ones?
- By the images or pictures depicted?
- By the use of rhyme?
- By the use of rhythm?
- By the structure of the poem (verse, pace and timing)?

Finally when you feel you have explored the meaning of the poem to your satisfaction, think about the following:

- Do you like this poem?
- Do you think it is a successful poem? (That is, do you think the writer succeeded in putting across what he/she intended, or not?)
- How far does the poem bring to mind experiences of your own?
- Do the choice of words, images, rhythm, contribute to the meaning?
- Does the poem seem complete and unified? Or can you think of ways of altering it which would improve it? (If so try these out - alter some of the rhymes for example, or rewrite it in prose and see if it conveys the same meaning.)

You might like to discuss Sylvia Plath's poem, *Metaphors*, now (*Activity* 7).

Activity 4 How to Read a Story

PREPARATION

The group will need good advance notice if you are going to discuss a short story or a novel. Think about supplies - you will need photocopies of short stories and an advance order to the library or bookshop for novels!

DISCUSSION

The questions below are prompts for a discussion of the story the group has chosen.

The plot	What is the story about?
The tone	What is the tone of the story? Is it funny, sad, bitter, joyful, sardonic, ghostly, sinister, charming, bleak, resigned, etc.?
The setting	What is the setting? Is it significant and in what way? How does the author convey the atmosphere and setting he/she wants?
	From whose point of view is the story told?
The characters	Who are the main characters?
	What are they like and how does the author let us know? (What do they do, say, sound like, look like, etc.?)
	What is their relationship to each other? How do we know this? What is their attitude to each other in terms of age, gender, class, race and religion?
	How does the author want us to view them? Sympathetically or not, and how does he achieve this?
	Do our sympathies change? How does the author achieve this?
	What do we learn about the culture and society in which they live?
The structure	Is there a crisis point in the story, or a twist?
	What changes afterwards?
	How do the characters and their relationship change?

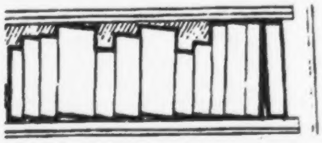
Your view Do you like the story? Why or why not?

Do you think it is a successful story? (What did the author intend when he/she wrote it and do you think he/she succeeded?)

OPTIONAL TASKS

- ☐ Briefly write a continuation of the story.
- ☐ Briefly write the story or a bit of it from another point of view (another character's or even a snail's or a bird's-eye view!)
- ☐ Imagine the character(s) in another setting and act it out or write about it.
- ☐ If it's a funny story how would you make it sinister or ghostly (or vice versa)? Have a go, and read out the results!
- ☐ Read the extract from *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys and discuss it. (It is about Rochester's [the character from *Jane Eyre*] thoughts on his marriage to the first Mrs Rochester.)

Activity 5 A Short Story



Read the story, *Happy Birthday* by Toni Cade Bambara, **before you come into the session**. Discuss it using the guidelines in Activity 4, perhaps dividing into small groups for part of the time.

Activity 6 Poetry in South Africa

This Activity looks at three poems from South Africa.[*]

- ☐ Someone volunteer to read the two poems, *Like a Wheel* and *In Detention*, out loud.
- ☐ Then, individually, read all three poems silently to yourselves.
- ☐ As a group, talk about your *initial* reactions to the poems:

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[*] Oupa Thando Mthimkulu, *Like a Wheel*; Christopher Van Wyk, *It is Sleepy in the Coloured Townships* and *In Detention*; taken from *A Land Apart: A South African Reader*, eds. André Brink and J.M. Coetzee, Faber & Faber, 1986.

- What are they describing?
- What impressions of South Africa do they convey?
- What is the mood of the poems? Are they, for instance, sad, happy, hopeful, resigned, bitter, angry, ironic, cynical?
- Whom do you think the writers are?
- How do they feel about their country and the people who live there?

☐ After reading the poems, how do *you* feel about South Africa?

TAKE A TEA BREAK ?

Divide into pairs or separate groups of 3-4 people and each group look at one of the poems in detail.

☐ Look first at the *meaning* of the poem. Then think about the *effect* the poem conveys and how it is achieved. In particular, consider:

- The ideas
- The imagery (the pictures created)
- The language
- The pattern/structure
- Special effects, like repetition, contrasts, irony, surprise, etc.

☐ Each group give a short presentation to the main group about the poem they have looked at.

CONCLUSION
As a group, talk about whether you have enjoyed reading the poems. Did you find them provocative?

OPTIONAL TASK

Compare the poems from South Africa with the one by Warrin Cooney.

FOLLOW-UP

If you would like to read more South African authors, you might like to try some of the following, mostly available in paperback or from your library:

J.M. Coetzee *(Waiting for the Barbarians; Life and Times of Michael K.; Age of Iron).*

André Brink *(A Dry White Season; States of Emergency; Rumours of Rain; Looking on Darkness).*

Athol Fugalo *(Tsotsi).*

Nadine Gordimer (many novels and short stories, including *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People).*

The collection from which the poems were taken, *A Land Apart: A South African Reader* (eds Brink and Coetzee).

Activity 7 **Imagery and Meaning**

Metaphors by Sylvia Plath

☐ Read the poem aloud

☐ Read the poem silently to yourselves

☐ What is the poem about?

DISCUSSION

- What is the significance of the number nine?
- Describe the imagery.
- What is your response to the last line?

Activity 1 handout

SEAMUS HEANEY
Digging

1 Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

2 Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into the gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

3 Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

4 The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving the cool hardness in our hands.

5 By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

6 My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away

7 Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

8 The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

9 Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

Taken from Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist*, Faber & Faber, 1988.

Activity 1 handout

JON STALLWORTHY
Two Hands

---

1 My father in his study sits up late,
a pencil nodding stiffly in the hand

2 that thirteen times between breakfast and
supper led a scalpel an intricate
dance. The phone has sobbed itself to sleep,

3 but he has articles to read. I curse
tonight, at the other end of the house,
this other hand whose indecisions keep
me cursing nightly; fingers with some style

4 on paper, elsewhere none. Who would have thought
hands so alike - spade palms, blunt fingers short
in the joint - would have no more in common? All
today, remembering the one, I have watched
the other save no-one, serve no-one, dance

5 with this pencil. Hand, you may have your chance
to stitch a life for fingers that have stitched

6 new life for many. Down the LANCET margin
his hand moves rapidly as mine moves slow.
A spasm shakes the phone at his elbow.
The pencil drops: he will be out again.

Taken from Jon Stallworthy, '*Root and Branch*, Phoenix Living Books, Chatto & Windus with Hogarth Press, 1976.

Activity 2 handout

AMRYL JOHNSON
Far and High
(The first song they learnt)

Far and high
far and high
We have set our sights up to the sky
There is no mountain we can't climb
Oh we ain't coming down
Our feet won't touch the ground

Blood or wine
blood or wine
We have drunk both grief and joy
We have drained the dregs of both
Either one caused us pain
Now, both taste the same

Love or hate
love or hate
We have chewed their jagged edges
'til they was powder in their mouths
From today our crying's done
Emotions take a back seat now

Weak or strong
weak or strong
We have danced with demons in our dreams
We have cowered from the breeze
Every battle has to be fought
Certain victory is never won

Far and high
far and high
We are climbing up the mountain side
to where the air is sweet and the eagles fly
A-n-d we ain't coming down
No, we ain't coming down

Far and high

Taken from *Gorgons*, Cofa Press.

JEAN RHYS
Wide Sargasso Sea

So it was all over, the advance and retreat, the doubts and hesitations. Everything finished, for better or worse. There we were, sheltering from the heavy rain under a large mango tree, myself, my wife Antoinette and a little half-caste servant who was called Amélie. Under a neighbouring tree I could see our luggage covered with sacking, the two porters and a boy holding fresh horses, hired to carry us up to 2,000 feet to the waiting honeymoon house.

The girl Amélie said this morning, 'I hope you will be very happy sir, in your sweet honeymoon house.' She was laughing at me I could see. A lovely little creature but sly, spiteful, malignant perhaps, like much else in this place.

'It's only a shower,' Antoinette said anxiously. 'It will soon stop.'

I looked at the sad leaning coconut palms, the fishing boats drawn up on the shingly beach, the uneven row of whitewashed huts, and asked the name of the village.

'Massacre.'

'And who was massacred here? Slaves?'

'Oh no.' She sounded shocked. 'Not slaves. Something must have happened a long time ago. Nobody remembers now.'

The rain fell more heavily, huge drops sounded like hail on the leaves of the tree, and the sea crept stealthily forwards and backwards.

So this is Massacre. Not the end of the world, only the last stage of our interminable journey from Jamaica, the start of our honeymoon. And it will look very different in the sun.

It had been arranged that we would leave Spanish Town immediately after the ceremony and spend some weeks in one of the Windward Islands, at a small estate which had belonged to Antoinette's mother. I agreed. As I had agreed to everything else.

The windows of the huts were shut, the doors opened into silence and dimness. Then three little boys came to stare at us. The smallest wore nothing but a religious medal round his neck and the brim of a large fisherman's hat. When I smiled at him, he began to cry. A woman called from one of the huts and he ran away, still howling.

The other two followed slowly, looking back several times.

As if this was a signal a second woman appeared at her door, then a third.

'It's Caro,' Antoinette said. 'I'm sure it's Caro. Caroline,' she called, waving, and the woman waved back. A gaudy old creature in a brightly flowered dress, a striped head handkerchief and gold ear-rings.

'You'll get soaked, Antoinette,' I said.

'No, the rain is stopping.' She held up the skirt of her riding habit and ran across the street. I watched her critically. She wore a tricorne hat which became her. At least it shadowed her eyes which are too large and can be disconcerting. She never blinks at all it seems to me. Long, sad, dark alien eyes. Creole of pure English descent she may be, but they are not English or European either. And when did I begin to notice all this about my wife Antoinette? After we left Spanish Town I suppose. Or did I notice it before and refuse to admit what I saw? Not that I had much time to notice anything. I was married a month after I arrived in Jamaica and for nearly three weeks of that time I was in bed with fever.

The two women stood in the doorway of the hut gesticulating, talking not English but the debased French patois they use in this island. The rain began to drip down the back of my feeling of discomfort and melancholy.

I thought about the letter which should have been written to England a week ago. Dear Father…

'Caroline asks if you will shelter in her house.'

This was Antoinette. She spoke hesitatingly as if she expected me to refuse, so it was easy to do so.

'But you are getting wet,' she said.

'I don't mind that.' I smiled at Caroline and shook my head.

'She will be very disappointed,' said my wife, crossed the street again and went into the dark hut.

Amélie, who had been sitting with her back to us, turned round. Her expression was so full of delighted malice, so intelligent, above all so intimate that I felt ashamed and looked away.

'Well,' I thought. 'I have had fever. I am not myself yet.'

The rain was not so heavy and I went to talk to the porters. The first man was not a native of the island. 'This a very wild place – not civilised. Why you come here?' He was called the Young Bull he told me, and he was twenty-seven years of age. A magnificent body and a foolish conceited face. The other man's name was Emile, yes, he was born in the village, he lived there. 'Ask him how old he is,' suggested the Young Bull. Emile said in a questioning voice, 'Fourteen? Yes I have fourteen years master.'

'Impossible,' I said. I could see the grey hairs in his sparse beard.

'Fifty-six years perhaps.' He seemed anxious to please.

The Young Bull laughed loudly.'He don't know how old he is, he don't think about it. I tell you sir these people are not civilised.'

Emile muttered, 'My mother she know, but she dead.'

Then he produced a blue rag which he twisted into a pad and put on his head.

Most of the women were outside their doors looking at us but without smiling. Sombre people in a sombre place. Some of the men were going to their boats. When Emile shouted, two of them came towards him. He sang in a deep voice. They answered, then lifted the heavy wicker basket and swung it on to his head-pad singing. He tested the balance with one hand and strode off, barefooted on the sharp stones, by far the gayest member of the wedding party. As the Young Bull was loaded up he glanced at me sideways boastfully and he too sang to himself in English.

The boy brought the horses to a large stone and I saw Antoinette coming from the hut. The sun blazed out and steam rose from the green behind us. Amélie took her shoes off, tied them together and hung them round her neck. She balanced her small basket on her head and swung away as easily as the porters. We mounted, turned a corner and the village was out of sight. A cock crowed loudly and I remembered the night before which we had spent in the town. Antoinette had a room to herself, she was exhausted. I lay awake listening to cocks crowing all night, then got up very early and saw the women with trays covered with white cloths on their heads going to the kitchen. The woman with small hot loaves for sale, the woman with cakes, the woman with sweets. In the street another called *Bon sirop, Bon sirop*, and I felt peaceful.

Jean Rhys was born in Dominica in 1894 and came to England when she was sixteen. After her father died she drifted into a series of jobs – chorus girl, mannequin, artists' model – and only began to write when the first of her three marriages broke up. She wrote about women as underdogs, exploited for and exploiting their sexuality. This extract is from Wide Sargasso Sea *published by Penguin Books, 1968.*

TONI CADE BAMBARA
Happy Birthday

Ollie spent the whole morning waiting. First she tried shaking Granddaddy Larkins, who just wouldn't wake up. She thought he was just playing, but he was out. His teeth weren't even in the glass, and there was a bottle on the bedstand. He'd be asleep for days. Then she waited on the cellar steps for Chalky, the building superintendent, to get through hauling garbage and come talk. But he was too busy. And then Ollie sat on the stairs waiting for Wilma. But it was Saturday and Wilma'd be holed up somewhere stuffing herself with potato chips and crunching down on jaw breakers, too greedy to cool it and eat 'em slow. Wilma'd come by tomorrow, though, and lie her behind off. "I went to Bear Mountain yesterday on a big boat with my brother Chestnut and his wife," she'd say, "and that's why I didn't come by for you cause we left so early in the morning that my mother even had to get me up when it was still dark out and we had a great time and I shot bows and arrows when we got there, and do you like my new dress?" Wilma always had some jive tale and always in one breath.

Ollie tried to figure out why she was even friends with Wilma. Wilma was going to grow up to be a lady and marry a doctor and live in New York, Wilma's mother said. But Ollie, poor orphan, was going to grow up and marry a drinking man if she didn't get killed first, Wilma's mother said. Ollie never told Granddaddy Larkins what Wilma's mother was all the time saying. She just hated her in private.

Ollie spent the early afternoon sitting on the rail in front of The Chicken Shack Restaurant, watching the cooks sling the wire baskets of chicken in and out of the frying fat. They were too sweaty and tired to tell her to move from in front. "Ruining the business," the owner used to fuss. Later she stood between the laundry and shoe store, watching some men pitch pennies against the building. She waited for a while, squeezing a rubber ball in her hand. If I can just get the wall for a minute, she thought, maybe somebody'll come along and we'll have us a good game of handball. But the men went right on pitching while other ones were waiting their turn. They'd be there for hours, so Ollie left.

She knocked on Mrs. Robinson's door to see if she wanted her dog walked. It was cool in the hallway at least. No one was home, not even the loud-mouth dog that usually slammed itself against the door like he was big and bad instead of being just a sorry little mutt. Then Ollie took the stairs two at a time, swinging up past the fourth floor to the roof. There was rice all over. Ronnie must have already fed his pigeons. The door to the roof was unlocked, and that meant that the big boys were on the roof. She planted her behind against the door and pushed. She kicked at a cluster of rice. Some grains bounced onto the soft tar of the roof and sank. When Ollie moved onto the roof, the blinding sun made her squint. And there they were, the big boys, jammed between the skylight and the chimney like dummies in a window, just doing nothing and looking half-asleep.

Peter Proper, as always, was dressed to the teeth. "I naturally stays clean," he was always saying. Today he said nothing, just sitting. Marbles, a kid from the projects, had an open book on his knees. James was there, too, staring at a fingernail. And Ferman, the nut from crosstown, and Frenchie, the athlete. A flurry of cinders floated down from the chimney and settled into their hair like gray snow.

"Why don't you just sit in the incinerator? You can get even dirtier that way," Ollie yelled. No one moved or said anything. She expected Frenchie to at least say,"Here comes Miss Freshmouth," or for Peter to send her to the store for eighteen cents' worth of American cheese. It was always eighteen cent's worth, and he always handed her a quarter and a nickel. Big Time. "Don't none of you want nothing from the store today?" She squinted with her hands on her hips, waiting for the store dummies to start acting like Marbles, Peter, James, and so forth.

Ferman straightened out a leg against against the skylight. "Ollie, when are you going to learn how to play with dolls?"

"Ya want anything from the store, Ferman Fruitcake? I'm too big for dolls." Ollie hitched up her jeans.

Ferman started to say something, but his audience was nearly asleep. Frenchie's head was nodding. James was staring into space. The pages of the open book on Marbles' knees were turning backward, three at a time, by themselves. Peter Proper was sitting very straight, back against the chimney with his eyes closed to the sun.

Ollie turned, looking over the edge of the roof. There was no one down in the park today. There was hardly anyone on the block. She propped a sticky foot against the roof railing and scraped off the tar. Everything below was gray as if the chimney had snowed on the whole block.

Chalky, the superintendent, was rolling a mattress onto a cart. Maybe he'd play cards with her. Just last Friday he had, but sometimes he wouldn't even remember her and would run and hide thinking she was King Kong come down just to hit him on the head or something. Ollie looked past the swings to the track. Empty. Frenchie should be out there trotting, she thought, looking back at him. He was dipping his head. Sometimes she'd trot beside Frenchie, taking big jumps to keep up. He'd smile at her but never teased her about them silly little jumps. He'd tell her for the hundredth time how he was going to enter the Olympics and walk off with a cup full of money.

"Go away, little girl!" Ferman had just yelled at her as if he had forgotten her name or didn't know her any more. He's as crazy as Chalky, thought Ollie, slamming the big roof door behind her and running down the stairs to the street. They must be brothers.

It was now four o'clock by the bank clock. Ollie remembered the bar-b-que place that had burned down. But she'd already rummaged through the ruins and found nothing. No use messing up her sneakers any further. She turned around to look the block over. Empty. Everyone was either at camp or at work or was sleeping like the boys on the roof or dead or just plain gone off. She could almost see into the high windows of Mount Zion A.M.E. Church. "This time I'm going to fly off and kill myself," she yelled, flapping her arms. A lady with bundles turned the corner and gave Ollie a look, crossed against the traffic, looking over her shoulder and shaking her head at what the kids of today had come to. Reverend Hall came out of the church basement, mopping his head with a big handkerchief.

"You go play somewhere else," he said, frowning into the sun.

"Where?" Ollie asked.

"Well, go to the park and play."

"With who?" she demanded. "I've got nobody to play with."

Reverend Hall just stood there trying to control his temper. He was always chasing the kids. That's why he's got no choir, Granddaddy Larkins was always saying. He always chases kids and dogs and pigeons and drunks.

"Little girl, you can't act up here in front of the church.
Have you no—"

"How come you always calling me little girl, but you sure know my name when I'm walking with my grandfather?" Ollie said.

"Tell'm all about his sanctified self," said Miss Hazel, laughing out her window. But when the Reverend looked up to scowl, she ducked back in. He marched back into the church, shooing the pigeons off the steps.

"Wish me happy birthday," Ollie whispered to the pigeons. They hurried off toward the curb. "Better wish me happy birthday," she yelled, "or somebody around here is gonna get wasted."

Miss Hazel leaned out the window again. "What's with you, Ollie? You sick or something?"

"You should never have a birthday in the summertime," Ollie yelled, "cause nobody's around to wish you happy birthday or give you a party."

"Well, don't cry, sugar. When you get as old as me, you'll be glad to forget all about—"

"I'm not crying." Ollie stamped her foot, but the tears kept coming and before she could stop herself she was howling, right there in the middle of the street and not even caring who saw her. And she howled so loudly that even Miss Hazel's great-grandmother had to come to the window to see who was dying and with so much noise and on such a lovely day.

"What's the matter with the Larkins child?" asked the old woman.

"Beats me." Miss Hazel shook her head and watched Ollie for a minute. "I don't understand kids sometimes," she sighed, and closed the window so she could hear the television good.

Toni Cade Bambara is a black woman writer born and brought up in Harlem, New York, the setting of many of her stories. She talks about her writing as concerned to break with past restraints of language, 'trying to break words open and get at the bones'. 'Happy Birthday' is taken from Toni Cade Bambara, Gorilla, My Love, *Women's Press Ltd.,1984.*

Activity 6 handout

OUPA THANDO MTHIMKULU
Like a Wheel

This thing is like a wheel
It turns
Today it's me
Tomorrow it's you

Today I'm hungry
Tomorrow it's you

Today I'm hungry
Tomorrow it's you
Today I'm homeless
Tomorrow it's you

Today I'm in prison
Tomorrow it's you

This thing is like a wheel

CHRISTOPHER VAN WYK
In Detention

He fell from the ninth floor
He hanged himself
He slipped on a piece of soap while washing
He hanged himself
He slipped on a piece of soap while washing
He fell from the ninth floor
He hanged himself while washing
He slipped from the ninth floor
He hung from the ninth floor
He slipped on the ninth floor while washing
He fell from a piece of soap while slipping
He hung from the ninth floor
He washed from the ninth floor while slipping
He hung from a piece of soap while washing

Activity 6 handout

CHRISTOPHER VAN WYK
It is Sleepy in the 'Coloured' Townships

It is sleepy in the 'Coloured' townships.
The dust clogs in the rheum of every eye
The August winds blow into all the days
Children play in a gust of streets
or huddle in tired dens like a multi-humped camel.

It is sleepy in the 'Coloured' townships.
Wet washing semaphore, then don't
and the dirt is spiteful to the whiteness
A Volkswagen engine lies embalmed in grease and grime
(the mechanic has washed his hands and left)
but the car waits patient as rust.

It is sleepy in the 'Coloured' townships.
Heads bob around the stove of the sun
The sleepiness is a crust harder than
a tortoise's shell.

It is sleepy in the 'Coloured' townships.
A drunk sleeps lulled by meths
Children scratch sores - sleep
bitten by the tsetse flies of Soweto
of June 16*
(Noordgesig lies on the fringes of Soweto).

It is sleepy in the 'Coloured' townships.
A pensioner in Coronation
lies dead for a week
before the stench of her corpse
attracts attention through keyholes
and windows.

---

* In an uprising by black schoolchildren in Soweto in 1976, in protest against being taught in the Afrikaans language, many children were killed by South African security forces.

Activity 6 handout

She does not know her beauty
She thinks her brown body has no glory
If she could dance naked under palm trees
And see her image in the river
She would know.

But there are no palm trees in the street
And dish water gives back no images.

A poem written in the 1930s by Warrin Cooney and quoted by Maya Angelou.

Activity 7 handout

SYLVIA PLATH
Metaphors

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

20 March 1959

9

REMINISCENCE

Recalling past experiences can be an enjoyable activity that helps a group of people get to know and value each other.

Guidance for Group Leaders

Focus on one area at a time, for then the memories become clearer and more vivid as one person's memories spark off another's.

It is important to ensure that everyone has a chance to talk. This can be done by getting into pairs to start with and then by taking it in turns round the group.

In the whole group it is important to share the time fairly equally but also for no one to feel pressured to speak if they don't want to.

Once you have started to remember, asking detailed questions like

'Who else was there?'

or

'Can you remember the colour of the dress you were wearing?'

often helps a person to recall more.

WARM-UP
If it is a new group, choose a warm-up which helps people to get to know each other's names.

☐ Go round saying your name and where you were born and who was in your family.

ACTIVITIES

The Activities give you several ideas for sessions, and you will probably also have some ideas of your own. Concentrate on one or two topics per session and the memories will be richer.

There are several ways of starting and you can mix the topics and methods as you wish.

PREPARATION

Choose the Activity you want to use before the session and bring along any objects suggested as an aid to remembering. A cassette or tape-recorder might be useful for some of the sessions.

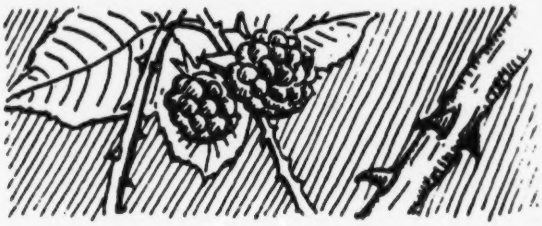
FOLLOW-UP

Reminiscence sessions can lead to other activities like writing, or making an exhibition of quotations from the session accompanied by photographs or objects. Local first schools or libraries are often keen to display these. They could also form the basis for a play or production by the group themselves or by a local drama group.

Alternatively, the session may arouse interest in having a talk or planning a visit to, say, a school or a local history museum.

RESOURCES

- A useful resource is *Lifetimes*, photographs and book of ideas available from **Age Exchange**, 11 Blackheath Village, London, SE3, **telephone 0131 89105**. Age Exchange also runs good training days.
- The **local museum** service often lends boxes of old objects grouped around different themes. You could use these as a starting-point.
- The **public library** will have a section on autobiography: read about other people's memories and lives.



Activities

Activity 1 **Bringing Back Memories**

Everyone bring to the session an object which brings back memories for them and which they wouldn't mind sharing with others.

☐ Each person take it in turn to talk about their object, describing it and the memories attached to it. Others then add any memories of their own the object brings back.

Old photographs could be used in the same way.

☐ Take in some '**smells**' - cloves, lemons, old-fashioned sweets, medicines, etc. Pass them round the group one at a time and talk about any memories they arouse.

☐ Look at some **old pictures of your locality** (your central library will have local history books or even a special collection of old photographs). Have things changed? For the better or the worse?

Activity 2 **Outings**

STARTING-POINT

Start with a **guided reflection**: sit comfortably, close your eyes and relax while one person (volunteer) talks through a scene with questions that may stir memories.

Volunteer: speak slowly and calmly, leaving plenty of time for people to recollect their own experiences after each prompt.

Think back to a time when you were a child and you were getting ready to go on an outing or a holiday.

You've been looking forward to it and now you're actually going.

How are you feeling?
What are you wearing?
What are you taking with you?
Who else is there?
What are they doing?

Now you are on your way.

How are you travelling? Foot? Bike? Car? Bus? Train?
What can you see?
Where are you going?
What are you looking forward to?

Now imagine you have arrived there.

What can you see associated with this place?
What can you smell?
What can you hear?
What can you taste?
What can you feel and touch?

Slowly open your eyes and come back to the present when you are ready.

DISCUSSION

As a whole group briefly discuss how you enjoyed the experience of being talked through a reflection on the past. Did it help to bring back memories?

Share some of the memories. Prompt each other with questions like:

- What were the best things about the outing or holiday you remembered?
- What were the worst things?
- What did you eat?
- What did you wear?
- Did you play any games or watch any entertainments?
- How much did the outing cost? Who paid? How was it paid for?
- How did you get home and what was the journey like?

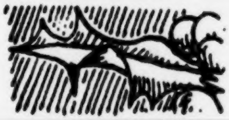
FOLLOW-UP

☐ The memories re-awakened by this session could lead to some **personal writing** on holidays or outings.

☐ If anyone is willing a **large picture** composed of all the memories could be drawn while people are talking.

☐ A simple **display** could be made by having a map in the middle with wool or string leading from where the holiday took place to a photograph of the holiday or of the person now, a name caption, and a piece of writing or brief quotation from each person recalling the best/funniest/worst thing about the holiday.

Activity 3 **Do You Remember?**



Choose to concentrate on a particular time or topic in this Activity, for example:

Childhood friends and childhood games (see Activity 4)

Schooldays

Festivals (Christmas, birthdays, bank holidays...)

Outings and holidays

Illness

Shops and shopping

Love

Work

War

☐ You might choose to recall your memories in pairs first. It is usually easier to talk to one other person and this makes sure everyone has a good chance to talk. Prompt each other with questions like:

> *'Who else was there?'*
> *'What did he/she look like? Wear? Do? Say?'*
> *'Can you remember what the room looked like?'*
> *'What happened next?'*

Spend about *10 minutes* on this.

☐ Ask people to feed back to the whole group the sort of things they remembered.

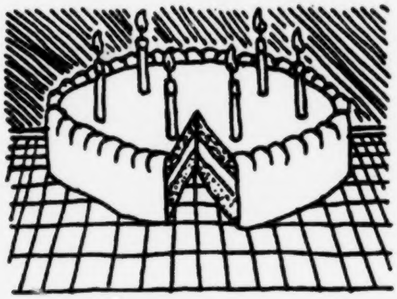
☐ Extend discussion on the topic in the whole group. If it dries up you could ask *'Does anyone else remember anything like this?'* or move the discussion on with a prompting question.

Allow about *1 hour* for all this.

TAKE A TEA BREAK?

After the break the group might like to:

☐ Choose another topic.



or

☐ Have each person retell the memory of their (or the group's choice) on to a tape or cassette recorder and listen to it together.

or

☐ Discuss in what ways life is different now, what is better and what worse.

Activity 4 **Childhood Games and Childhood Friends**

In pairs

☐ Tell each other about some of the things you liked playing best when you were a child and who you played with.

or

☐ Do you remember a special toy or game which meant a lot to you?

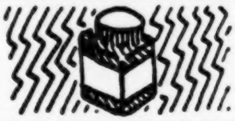
Allow *5-10 minutes* for this.

Whole group
What sort of things were people remembering? Encourage recall by prompting with questions about:

- Toys...any favourites? How many?
- Where did you play?
- Differences between town and country?
- What were your favourite places to play in? What did you do there?
- Who did you play with?
- Did boys play with girls? What games? Up to what age?
- Any regional/cultural differences?

You could finish this session by reading a passage from an autobiography. There will be a selection in your local library.

Activity 5 **Illness**



This session could be used as a preliminary to the section on **Health** (p. 87).

STARTING-POINT

☐ Each person bring in a small selection of **old-fashioned remedies** or medicines - oil of peppermint, oil of cloves, onion, cough mixture, Friars Balsam, cough sweets, etc.

☐ Pass them round one at a time and ask what memories they bring back. What were they used for? What home remedies were used in your family and are there any you still swear by?

DISCUSSION

Home remedies were much relied on before the advent of modern medicine and the National Health Service (NHS). As a group, think about what else was different before the NHS, using the following questions as guidelines:

- Does anyone remember a time before the NHS when someone in the family needed a doctor? What happened? How much was the charge?
- Did any families belong to private insurances schemes before the NHS?
- What happened if people needed to go to hospital?
- What happened when someone had a baby?
- What about quarantine?
- Which diseases were most dreaded?

Allow about *45 minutes to 1 hour* for all this.

TAKE A TEA BREAK?

After a tea break the discussion could be brought into the present:

- What do you remember about the introduction of the NHS?
- What difference did it make to you and your family?
- How do you look after yourselves now (diet, exercise, etc.)?
- What medical services do you use?
- What is your experience of these services? Is there any way you would like to see them improved?
- What do you know about and think of alternative medicines (homeopathy, acupunture, aromatherapy, reflexology, etc.)?

FOLLOW-UP

Follow-up sessions could include:

☐ A talk.

☐ A self-help session using a First Aid book to answer questions round the group.

☐ Asking someone to come and teach some simple hand and foot massage techniques.

Activity 6 Dances and Courtship

Remembering going to dances and all the rituals involved in courtship can make for a very enjoyable session.

☐ Try remembering and describing in detail what you wore, hairstyles, make up.

☐ What was and was not allowed or approved of?

☐ Where did you go?

☐ Remember the tunes you danced to. The brave can try humming or singing them or you could bring some records or tapes to play. The local library will lend these for a small fee.

☐ What dances were popular?

☐ How do the ways in which young people get to know each other now compare with your own past experiences?

☐ Do you think the young have more or less fun? more or less freedom than you had?

Activity 7 From Child to Adult

This Activity is about comparing memories by looking at a poem from South Africa, *For My Brothers (Mandia and Bheki) in Exile,* by Ben J. Langa.

This session could be combined with one from the **Reading for Pleasure** section, **How to Read a Poem.**

☐ Someone volunteer to read the poem out loud to the group.

☐ Then everyone separately spend about *10 minutes* reading the poem silently.

GROUP DISCUSSION

- What is the poem about?
  Why is the author thinking about his childhood?
  How does it contrast with the present day?
  Why is his mother sad?
  What particularly about the brothers' early years influences their adult live?

- What does the poem tell us about South Africa?

- Are the author's childhood experiences very different from your own? What about his present circumstances compared to yours?

TAKE A TEA BREAK?

About 30 minutes

COMPARISONS

☐ Each person write a short piece (either poetry, prose, or just notes) contrasting their childhood and their adulthood *(about 20 minutes).*

☐ Each person in turn read out what they have written to the whole group.
Are there similarities in your experiences of childhood? And of adulthood?
How much do members of the group think external circumstances (As in South Africa) influence the development of child into adult?
Does the group agree with the idea that 'The child is father of the man' (William Wordsworth)?

FOLLOW-UP

There might be someone in your group - or you could invite an outside speaker - who would talk to the group about experiences of childhood in a different country or a different culture.

BEN J. LANGA

For My Brothers (Mandla and Bheki) in Exile

You have seen part of the world
Met some very nice people
Experienced the hardships of fresh air
Longed for the warm home-fires
Around which we sat on winter nights
Listening to pa tell us stories
Or reading passages from the Bible.
Those were the days, my brother Mandla,
Some days they were, my brother Bheki.
Do you remember those days?
When we were young and happy together
Playing cops and robbers, hide and seek,
Pinching bottoms whilst in hiding —
Young and happy together?
One day it would rain
And before the night was out
We'd be carrying brooms, sacks and buckets,
Urging the water out of our house.
You do remember those days?

Maybe I do not know who you are.
You left in the stealth of the night
Maybe hiked miles in fear but determined
To finally reach new worlds unknown.
Some days I happen to clean house
Exploring every nook and cranny.
I find here and there memories of our youth
Written on scraps of black and white photos.
I shake my head in pain of loss,
Say to myself,'Gone are those days.'

The old woman is still around, brothers,
Heavy creases run down her mahogany face;
They are dry rivulets opened by heavy rains of pain.
At night, alone in the vaults of darkness,
She prays. In her prayer she talks about you.
Mama cries at night – by day she laughs,
Tending sisters' small children.
I know she longs to catch but one glimpse
Of her flesh and blood. Of her own womb.
Sometimes she talks about it,
Swallowing lumps, hiding tears behind eyes.
Mama is strong. Very tough. She was carved in teak.
In the evenings when we're together.
Then she goes to sleep.

On Xmas Day mama makes custard and jelly,
Reminds us of how we all looked forward to Xmas
Because that was about the only day
We have tasted custard and jelly.
Big bowls of jelly would be made
Then taken to the kindly butcher
(Remember, we didn't have a fridge).
Some time before our big meal
She'd send one of us to collect the bowls.
I remember we would handle those bowls gingerly
As though our whole life depended on them.

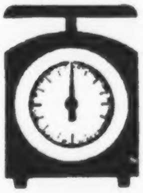
I do not know, maybe, what you're doing out there.
I know you're alive, yet longing for the home country.
You loved this country deeply,
So much that you could deeply,
So much that you could leave only to come back
When it has gained more sense.
Our neighbours (the ones you knew so well) are still there.
We meet at the tap (it's still outside) and chat.
They ask about you. They care about you.
Those days you do remember.
In all our pain and agony we rejoice,
For the tensile strength of our souls
Transcends border and boundaries.
However far apart our bodies may be
Our souls are locked together in a perpetual embrace.

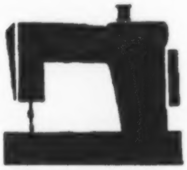
From *A Land Apart: A south African Reader*, ed. André Briuk and J.M. Coetzee, Faber and Faber, 1986.

10

FUN WITH FIGURES

Many people feel that they are no good at handling figures. Yet it is often these same people who are so good at balancing family budgets, following instructions and timetables, or working out quantities needed for DIY. This section introduces some basic techniques for fractions and percentages, using topical examples for both figure work and discussion.





Guidance for Group Leaders

For this section the group will need to use calculators. Some members of your group may never have used a calculator so it would be a good idea to pair them with people who have used them before.

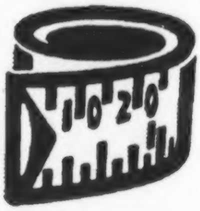
Encourage people to work together, in pairs or threes, in these Activities.

WARM-UPS

Warm-Up 1
Begin by going round the group in turn asking each person to contribute an everyday example of when they use figures.

You could prompt with suggestions from this list:

- working out family budgets
- shopping
- using timetables
- following a knitting pattern
- using a recipe
- working out DIY material needs



Warm-Up 2
Give out the *Number Puzzles* sheet (p. 148) and see how many people can do in pairs in ten minutes.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1 Fiddling the Figures

This Activity encourages participants to be critical about accepting figures at face value. It will take about *ten minutes* to complete.

Activity 2 Using a Calculator

This is a short Activity which people can do in pairs. Encourage those who have some experience with calculators to help those who haven't. Encourage them to make up their own calculations as well as trying those here. Check that everyone ends up feeling reasonably happy with a calculator. Allow about *ten minutes*.

Activity 3 Percentages and Fractions

This Activity is a little more complicated. It aims to help people handle percentages and fractions in preparation for the topic Activities that follow.

There are six questions to answer. Encourage people to undertake this Activity in pairs and allow about *fifteen minutes*. If some people find it too difficult, give them some help or find someone else who can. Treat the Activity as fun - it doesn't matter if you can't do it. Just have a go!

Topic Activities

Either choose one of the topics and all tackle it as a group, or give small groups different topics to report back about. The topics are:

Activity 4 **Britain's Ageing Population**

Activity 5 **Puzzling about Pensions**

Activity 6 **Figuring out Inflation**

The topic Activities are a mixture of calculations and wider questions.

Answers and discussion

The answers to calculations are at the end of each Activity. Answers to the wider questions will come from people's own ideas. Small groups might appoint someone to write down their ideas for reporting back to the large group.

CONCLUSION

Ask people to say in turn how much more confident they feel about handling a calculator and having a go at questions like these.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Why not try out the crossword puzzle (p. 149) at home?

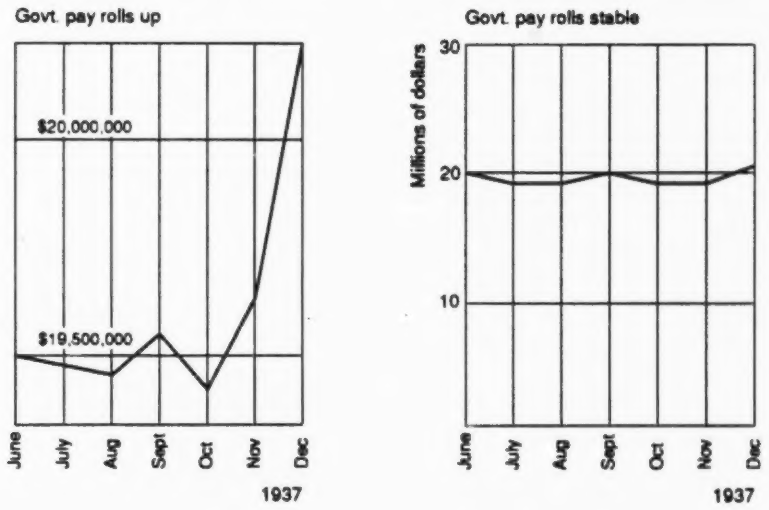
Activities

Activity 1 **Fiddling Figures**

You should never take figures at face value. They can be used to confuse as well as enlighten. Many political debates hinge on the different use of figures, for example about the health service or education. This does not mean that all statistics are 'damned lies'! They can be very useful things. However, it does mean you need to take care and keep questioning.

Why might you need to take care with the following?

1) Cleanbright is 50 per cent more effective than any other brand of toothpaste in fighting plaque!



2

Source: Darrell Huff, *How to Lie with Statistics, 1984*

2) What's the difference?

3) The average person spends only £600 per year on motoring expenses.

4) Living standards have improved in Britain in the last ten years.

5) 'We are spending 9 per cent more on the Health Service!'

Don't read here till you have discussed the questions!

1) This is a bold but unsubstantiated claim! To judge if it was true we would need to know how much testing Cleanbright's manufacturers did and what sort of tests they performed. We might also be a bit suspicious of a nice neat figure like 50 per cent.

2) This is a visual trick. Both graphs show the same information but on a different scale, so the one on the right makes the pay rise look very small and the one on the left makes the same pay rise look very large. To judge whether the pay rise is in fact very large you would need to compare it to other things, like previous years' figures and pay rises in other sectors.

3) The phrase 'average person' is misleading. It really means the 'average amount' spent.

   The average [amount spent] is calculated by dividing the *total amount spent* by the *total number of people*.

   Here we are not told *who* and *how many* the people are - they could be the total adult population or just all car owners. Since the number of car owners is smaller than the number of the total adult population, the expenditure figure would obviously be *lower* if the average was based on the whole population, e.g.

   $$\frac{\text{expenditure}}{\text{car owners}} \quad \frac{£30,000}{300} = \text{average expenditure £300 per person}$$

   $$\frac{\text{expenditure}}{\text{total adult pop.}} \quad \frac{£30,000}{3,000} = \text{average expenditure £30 per person}$$

   Using the later average would obviously benefit car manufacturers since it purports (falsely) to prove the cheapness of car ownership.

   Also, it would be interesting to see some differences relating to different models or different sorts of usage.

4) This might be so overall, but we need to know if some groups have benefited more than others, whether any have experienced a fall in their living standards, and whether the gap between richer and poorer is growing or shrinking.

5) Since when? Does this take account of inflation? Does this take account of growing needs, for example, more elderly? Is it all going on wages?

Activity 2 **Using a Calculator**

Have you ever used a calculator before? If so, why don't you pair up with someone who needs some help. If you have never used one before, don't take fright: you will find it really very simple!

☐ Begin by identifying the numbers on the face. Tap out a number and see it appear in the window at the top. Press the C button to cancel the number and clear the window.

☐ Now identify these signs: **+ - x**. These are all you need for this and the following Activities.

☐ Using each sign in turn, try out some calculations. You may find that some of your answers have a decimal point, e.g. 6.8 or 5.46.

Decimal means measuring, in order, in units of 10, 100, 1,000 etc. The numbers in front of the point are whole numbers. The numbers after are less than whole numbers. For instance, .8 means eight-tenths, and .46 means four-tenths and six-hundredths. Think of decimal currency, where £1 = 100 pence. So £5.46 means five whole pounds, four-tenths (40p) and six-hundredths (6p).

When you have done that, have a go at the following:

a) 654 + 345 =

b) 980 - 541 =

c) 64 x 45 =

d) 472 - 34 =

e) 50 x 23 - 43 =

f) 5 x 100 =

g) 42 x 100 =

h) 456 + 982 + 643 =

i) 6.78 + 5.4 =

j) 98.3 - 71.4 =

Answers:
a) 999 b) 439 c) 2880 d) 438 e) 1107
f) 500 g) 4200 h) 2081 i) 12.18 j) 26.9

Activity 3 Percentages and Fractions

PERCENTAGES

We frequently come across the use of percentages, for instance in the press or on television.

'PENSIONS ARE INCREASING BY 7 PER CENT' *'INFLATION IS UP BY 9 PER CENT'* *'UNEMPLOYMENT STANDS CURRENTLY AT 8 PER CENT'*

What do these figures mean?
Percentage means parts (per) of one hundred (cent). So, the figures above would mean:

1) That for every one pound (100 pence), pensions will increase by 7 pence (i.e. 7 parts of 100).

2) For every £100 you spent on goods last year you would now have to spend £109 (9 parts of 100).

3) For every 100 people who are at work or registered unemployed, 8 are unemployed (8 parts of 100).

QUESTION 1 ????

By how much in the pound have the following costs increased?

- Spending on the National Health Service has risen by 8 per cent in the last year.
- Pay rises for local government workers are up 7 per cent this year.
- The cost of electricity for consumers is up by 6 per cent.

COMMON PERCENTAGES

You are probably familiar with the following common percentages:

50 per cent of something is half

25 per cent of something is a quarter

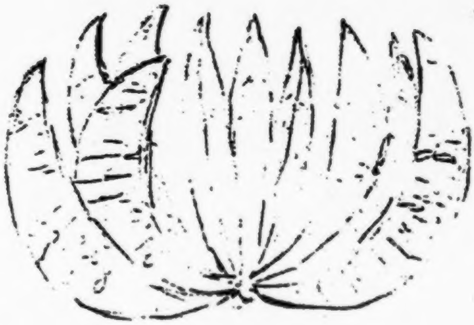
33 per cent of something is approximately a third

QUESTION 2

????

How many segments of this orange would you have if you had:

20%   40%   75%   90%



(Clue: The total [orange] = 100%. There are 10 segments, so each segment equals one-tenth of the whole: 100 ÷ 10 = 10, so each segment equals 10%.)

FRACTIONS INTO PERCENTAGES

A fraction is a part of a whole.

The lower half of a fraction tells you how many the whole consists of. In the case of the orange it comes in ten parts. The upper figure tells you how many parts of the whole you have. If you have only three segments of orange, you have three-tenths, or:

$$\frac{3}{10}$$

QUESTION 3

What fractions would you have if you had the following number of segments?

2   5   7   9

The top number and the bottom number of a fraction can sometimes be divided by the same number so you end up with a more manageable figure, e.g.

$$\frac{5}{10} \text{ divided by } 5 = \frac{1}{2}, \frac{8}{10} \text{ divided by } 2 = \frac{4}{5}$$

TURNING FRACTIONS INTO PERCENTAGES

It is very easy to turn fractions into percentages. All you do is multiply the fraction by 100, e.g.

$$\frac{1}{4} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{100}{4} = 25\%, \quad \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{100}{2} = 50\%$$

QUESTION 4

????

Try turning the fractions found in Question 3 into percentages, e.g.

$$\frac{2}{10} = \frac{2}{10} \times \frac{100}{1} = \frac{200}{10} = 20\%$$

USING YOUR CALCULATOR

When you use your calculator to work out percentages you multiply the top number of the fraction by 100 and then divide by the bottom number. You will need to use your calculator to work out complicated percentages like:

$\frac{3}{16}$ (18.75%),

or

$\frac{8}{9}$ (88.888888%).

Try it!

QUESTION 5 ????

Work out these fractions as percentages on your calculator:

$\frac{5}{16}$ $\frac{3}{7}$ $\frac{21}{29}$ $\frac{63}{78}$ $\frac{33}{42}$

ROUNDING UP OR DOWN

Sometimes, as you can see, numbers you end up with are rather long and clumsy. In this case you can shorten them. You usually want to end up with only two figures after the decimal point. If the third figure is a 5 or higher, you increase the second figure by one and 'lose' the other numbers. If it is 4 or less you keep the second figure as it is but still 'lose' the numbers after it, e.g.

42.857 becomes 42.86

16.7864 becomes 16.79

189.6748 becomes 189.67

QUESTION 6 ????

Round the following up or down:

42.657 71.893 679.562 83.635

Answers

QUESTION 1

For every pound that was spent last year on the NHS, 8 pence *more* is being spent this year.

Local government workers are earning 7 pence *more* per pound than they were last year.

For every £1 you spent on electricity last year, you would be spending £1.06 this year.

QUESTION 2

2 4 7.5 9

QUESTION 3

$\frac{1}{5}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{7}{10}$ $\frac{9}{10}$

QUESTION 4

20% 50% 70% 90%

QUESTION 5

31.25% 42.857142% 72.413793% 80.76923% 78.571428%

QUESTION 6

42.66 71.90 679.56 83.64

Activity 4 Britain's Ageing Population

The size of the British population in 1991 was approximately 56 million (56,000,000).

10 million people were of retirement age (i.e. women over 60 or men over 65).

QUESTION 1

????

a) Try and work out what percentage of the British population in 1991 was of retirement age.

(*Clue:* State the number of retired people (10m) as a fraction of the whole population (56m): $\frac{10}{56}$. Then, using your calculator, work out the percentage by the method described in Activity 3: (10 x 100) ÷ 56 = ?)

b) How many people out of every 100 were of retirement age in 1991?

(*Clue:* Think about what a percentage is!)

c) In 1961, 7.5 million people were of retirement age out of a population of approximately the same size as in 1991 - 56 million. What percentage of the population was of retirement age in 1961?

(Clue: State the fraction, which is 7.5 or 56. To write this as a fraction, you need to add a nought to each figure: $\frac{75}{560}$ Then, using your calculator, work out the percentage: (75 x 100) ÷ 560 = ? Although this fraction has to be written as $\frac{75}{560}$, your calculator will give the same answer if you calculate: (7.5 x 100) ÷ 56. Try it!)

d) It is expected that by the year 2015, 12.5 million people will be of retirement age and the population is still likely to be around 56 million. What will be the percentage of the population of retirement age in 2015?

DISCUSSION *1*

- Is the percentage of retired people increasing or decreasing? Why do you think this is?
- What are the implications for society of having a larger retired population?

QUESTION 2

????

a) In 1991, 3.5 million (3,500,000) people were aged 75 or older. What percentage is this of the retired population?

(Clue: Multiply 3.5 by 100 and divide by the number, in millions, of the retired population.)

b) In the same year, 0.8 million (800,000) people were 85 years or older. What percentage is this of the retired population?

(It is expected that by the year 2000 the number of over 75s will increase by 20 per cent and the number of over 85s will increase by 51 per cent.)

DISCUSSION *2*

- What services will an older population need?

LIFE EXPECTANCY

In 1901, the average life expectancy for women was 48 and for men, 40.

In 1980, the average life expectancy for women was 76 and for men, 70.

QUESTION 3 ????

a) How many more years can women and men in Britain expect to live today than in 1901?

b) How many more years do women in Britain live longer than men?

DISCUSSION *3*

- Why do you think life expectancy has improved?
- Why do women live longer than men?

The figures above are averages (see Activity 1(3)), which means that they are calculated to show life expectancy for the *population as a whole*. Within the average, some people will have a greater and some a shorter life expectancy than the figures shown.

- Why might some people or groups of people have a shorter life expectancy than others?

Answers

QUESTION 1

a) 17.86% b) about 18 c) 13.39% d) 22.32%

QUESTION 2

a) 35% b) 8%

QUESTION 3

a) 28 years and 30 years b) 6 years

(Figures from *Social Trends 1991*; Age Concern, *Resource Paper HF7*.)

Activity 5 Puzzling About Pensions

In 1978, 8.6 million people received a state retirement pension.

In 1986, 9.6 million received a state retirement pension.

QUESTION 1 ????

What is the increase in the number of people receiving a state retirement pension since 1978?

TOP PENSIONERS

Approximately 20 per cent of pensioner households have an average annual income of £10,000.

Approximately 6 per cent have an annual income of between £9,500 and £11,500.

More than 10 per cent have an annual income of £11,500-£25,000 or over.

QUESTION 2 ????

Can you explain in words what these percentages mean (i.e. numbers out of a hundred)?

DISCUSSION *1*

- Do any of the figures surprise you?
- Why do some pensioners have a much higher income than others?

LOWER-INCOME PENSIONERS

In 1990, the bottom 20 per cent (or twenty in every hundred) of pensioner households had an average annual income of £3,300, including benefits.

Take-up of benefits is often low amongst pensioners: 2 million are on Income Support and 1 million more who are entitled, do not claim.

QUESTION 3 ????

If there are 10 million pensioners, what percentage are on such low incomes that they are entitled to claim Income Support?

(*Clue*: Find the fraction ($\frac{3}{10}$), then, using your calculator, work out the percentage.)

DISCUSSION 2

- Why do so many pensioners not claim the benefits to which they are entitled? What, if anything, should be done about this?

AGE CONCERN AND PENSIONS

Age Concern argues that retirement pensions for individuals should be one-third of average earnings.

Average weekly male earnings 1991 = £269

Average weekly female earnings 1991 = £182

Therefore average earnings* = (269 + 182) ÷ 2 = £225

A pensioner should, therefore, receive £225 ÷ 3 = £75

Pensions in the summer of 1991 were £52 for individuals and £81.25 for couples.

QUESTION 4

????

a) By this calculation, how much more should individuals be getting?

b) If couples were receive twice the Age Concern single pension, how much more would they be getting?

c) The Christmas bonus of £10 was introduced in 1973 at £10. To keep pace with inflation, it would need to be approximately £48 in 1991. How much more would pensioners receive if the bonus had kept rise with inflation?

d) Before 1980 retirement pensions were increased by whichever had risen higher, prices or earnings. In 1980, this link was broken and pensioners' increases depended on the rise in prices. As wages had risen higher in this period, pensioners therefore lost out.

If the link had been kept, pensioners today (1991) would receive £14.55 more for single people and £23 more for couples than what they now (1991) get. What would pensions be today (1991) if this linkage had been retained?

---

* See Activity 1 (3).

Answers

QUESTION 1

1 million

QUESTION 2

Twenty out of every hundred pensioner households have an annual income of £10,000; six out of every hundred have an annual income of between £19,500 and £11,500; ten out of every hundred have an annual income of between £11,500 and £25,000.

QUESTION 3

30%

QUESTION 4

a) £23 b) £68.75 c) £38 d) £66.55 single, £104.25 couple

(Figures from the *New Earnings Survey*; Age Concern *Resource Papers*.)

Activity 6 **Figuring Out Inflation**

Inflation means an increase in the price of goods and services, usually measured over one year. Inflation creates problems for all of us and especially for people on fixed incomes.

It is often difficult to judge by how much prices have risen. Take a loaf of bread which one day costs 68p and the next day costs 76p. The loaf costs 8p more, but how can you tell how much its price has risen in proportion to its original cost?

There is a useful formula that helps you work this out by showing the price rise as a percentage of the original price:

$$\frac{\textbf{difference in price x 100}}{\textbf{original price}} = \textbf{\% increase in price}$$

In this case the *difference* in the price is 8p. The original price is 68p. The answer is 11.76 per cent. Did you expect it to be so high?

QUESTION 1 ????

Try these examples, using your calculator and the method on the previous page.

a) A pint of milk rises from 28p to 32p.

(Clue: The fraction is $\frac{4}{28}$. Now calculate the percentage increase!)

b) A packet of cornflakes rises from 94p to 110p.

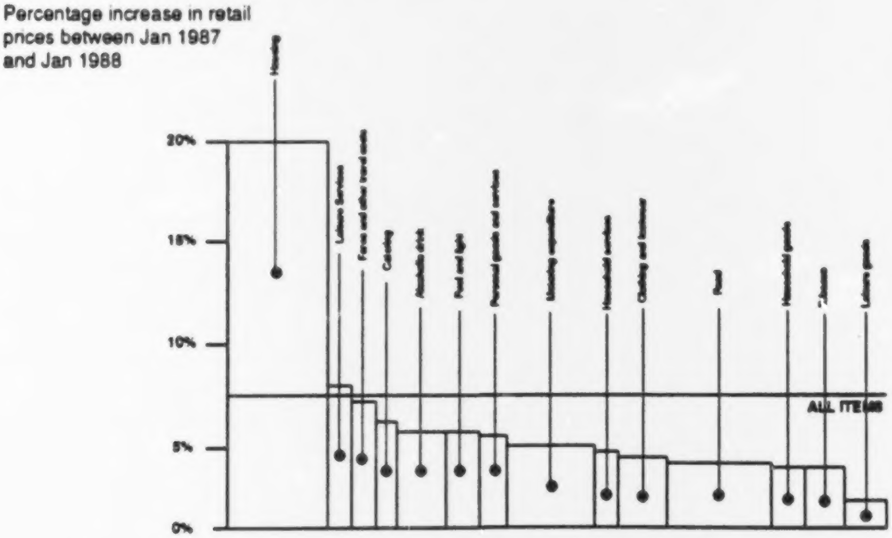
c) Bus fares go up from 45p to 55p.

d) Swimming pool charges rise from 120p to 140p.

HOW DOES THE GOVERNMENT CALCULATE THE INFLATION RATE?

The government works with the idea of a 'shopping basket' of the goods and services we spend most of our money on. It includes items like **Food**, **Housing**, **Fuel and Light**, **Motoring**, **Alcoholic Drink,** etc.

Each year the government does a survey called the Family Expenditure Survey and finds out what different households spend their money on and then works out the average overall expenditure on the different goods and services for that year. Separate monthly surveys are made to find out how much prices have risen for the separate items over the same year, and from these two sets of figures the government is able to calculate the overall *inflation rate* for the year.



Source: *Employment Gazette*, HMSO, May 1988

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☐ Look at the bars in the diagram, each of which represents one of the items in the 'shopping basket'. The *width* of each bar shows the proportion that item ' represents of the total (or overall) expenditure. The *wider the bar,* therefore, the more we (collectively) spend on these items.

QUESTION 2 ????

a) Which items do we, as a nation, spend most of our money on?

b) Which items does your household spend most of its money on and how does this differ from the national spending pattern shown in the diagram?

☐ Now look at the *height* of the bars. They show how much prices of that item have risen in a year (as measured on the vertical line or axis labelled 'Percentage increase in retail prices...'). The horizontal line labelled 'All items' shows the *overall* increase in prices - the inflation rate - for that year (January 1987-January 1988), about 7 per cent. Some items, like Housing (20 per cent) increased *above* the overall rate of inflation (look at where the 'All Items' line crosses the Housing bar), and others, like Clothing and Footwear (6 per cent) increased at a *lower* rate.

QUESTION 3 ????

Social Security benefits, including state retirement pensions, are raised in line with the (overall) inflation rate. Yet people on low incomes spend relatively more of their income on items like housing and travel which tend to have higher *individual* inflation rates. What effect will this have on the incomes of people on low incomes or benefits?

Answers

QUESTION 1

a) 14.29% b) 17.02% c) 22.22% d) 16.67%

QUESTION 2

a) Housing, food, motoring and alcoholic drink.

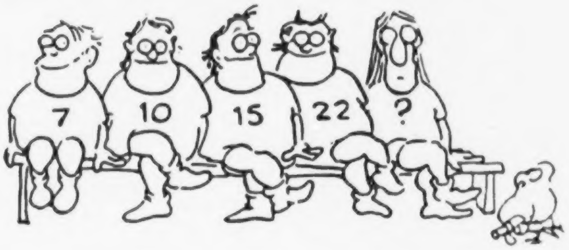
QUESTION 3

People on low incomes, such as pensioners, the unemployed, the low paid and students, suffer more from inflation than people on higher incomes.

Warm Up handout

NUMBER PUZZLES

(1) Waiting on the sidelines are the reserve members of the Cardiff Juniors' Rugby Club. The numbers on their shirts form a series. What number should the reserve wing on the end be sporting?



(2) Greedy Kate has cut a big cake into slices — a large one for herself and several smaller ones for the rest of the family. Three-quarters of the number of slices to the left of the big slice is 6. How many slices are there altogether?

(3) What are the next three letters in this sequence?

OTTFFSS_ _ _

(4) If 5 cats catch 5 rats in 5 minutes, how many cats will it require to catch 100 rats in 100 minutes?

(5) If you count 20 houses on your right going to school, and 20 houses on your left coming home, how many houses in all have you counted?

(6) How can you remove one-third of six and get nine?

(7) In the ping-pong singles championships semi-finalists Jess, James, Jill and Justin all had to play each other once. How many matches were played altogether?

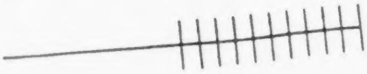
(8) Thirty birds sit on the upper branches of a tree. A so-called 'sportsman' fires three volleys of buckshot at the birds, killing half of one-third of their number.

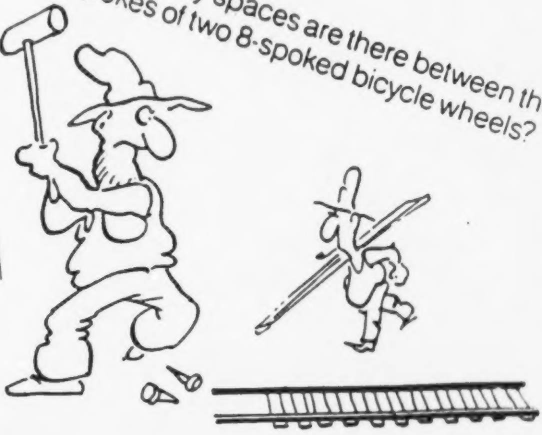
Can you quickly say how many birds remain?

(9) How many months have 28 days?

(10) How many spaces are there between the spokes of two 8-spoked bicycle wheels?

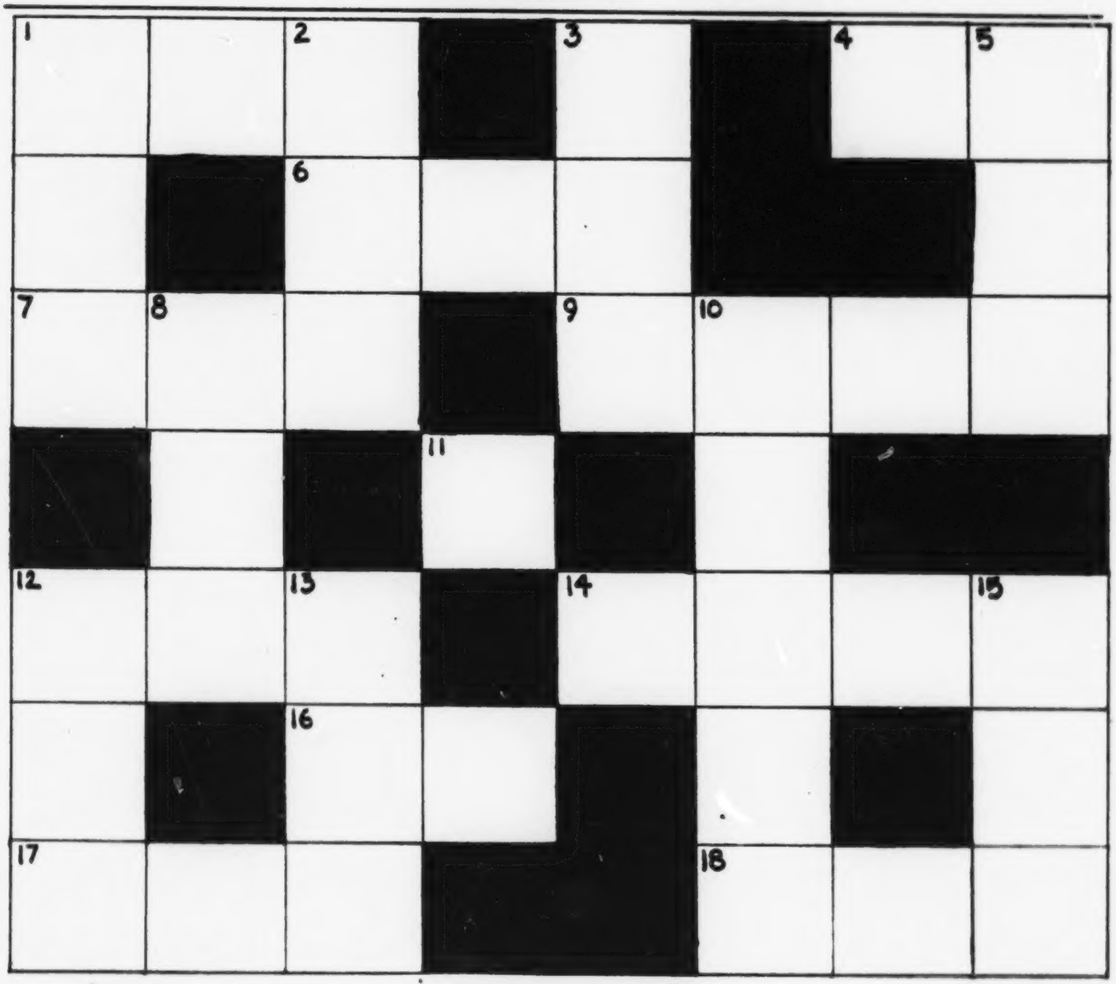
(11) If all even numbers are green and all odd numbers are red what colour is an even number plus an odd number?





(12) These railway workers are busily laying sleepers. In the following diagram you can see how much is completed and how much remains to be done. How do the two distances compare?

CROSSWORD



Across

1. A gross
4. The key of the door
6. Eight centuries
7. Pence in old pound
9. Yards in mile
11. Age of reason
12. Emergency!
14. Next century
16. 32 + 38 =
17. 10 + 3 (and on and on)
18. Seven over 200

Down

1. 62 + 37 + 93 =
2. 12 x 40 =
3. How many Dalmatians?
5. Queen sends telegram
8. (16 x 8) + 263 + 68 =
10. Sixty four thousand and fifty two
12. 17 off 1000
13. 97 x 10 + 3
15. Secret Agent

NUMBER PUZZLES – Answers

(1) 31 (series + 3, + 5, + 7 ... + 9)

(2) 9 (8 small + 1 big slice)

(3) ENT (One Two Three Four Five Six Seven Eight Nine Ten!)

(4) 5 (In 20 mins 1 cat will catch 20 rats. 20 x 5 = 100)

(5) 20

(6) Take 2 away from 11

(7) 6

(8) 25

(9) 12

(10) 16

(11) Red (even + odd always equals odd)

(12) They are the same

[1] 1	4	[2] 4	■	[3] 1	■	[4] 2	[5] 1
9	■	[6] 8	0	0	■	■	0
[7] 2	[8] 4	0	■	[9] 1	[10] 6	7	0
■	5	■	[11] 7	■	4	■	■
[12] 9	9	[13] 9	■	[14] 2	0	0	[15] 0
8	■	[16] 7	0	■	5	■	0
[17] 3	3	3	■	■	[18] 2	0	7

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Age Concern, 60 Pitcairn Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 3LL

Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4EJ;
Telephone 081 679 8000

Alzheimer's Disease Society, 158/160 Balham High Road, London SW12 9BN;
Telephone 081 675 6557/8/9

Arthritis Care, 6 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7ER;
Telephone 071 235 0902/5

Arthritis and Rheumatism Council, 41 Eagle Street, London WC1R 4AR;
Telephone 071 905 8572

Centre for Policy on Ageing, 25-31 Ironmonger Row, London EC1V 3QP

Chest, Heart and Stroke Association, CHSA House, Whitecross Street, London
EC1Y; Telephone 071 490 7999

Commission for Racial Equality, Elliot House, 10-12 Allington Street, London
SW1E 5EH

Community Education, Open University, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

Disability Allowance, 25 Denmark Street, London WC2H 8NV;
Telephone 071 240 0806

Equal Opportunities Commission, Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester M3
3HN; Telephone 061 833 9244

Health Education Authority, Resource Centre, 78 New Oxford Street, London
WC1A 1AH

Help the Aged, St. James Walk, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R OBE

King's Fund Informal Caring Support Unit, King's Fund Centre, 126 Albert
Street, London NW1 7NP

National Osteoporosis Society, Barton Meade House, PO Box 10, Radstock, Bath
BA3 3YB

Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys, St. Catherine's House,
10 Kingsway, London WC2B 6JP; Telephone 071 242 0262

Parkinson's Disease Society, 36 Portland Place, London W1N 3DG

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), 224 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6AA; Telephone 071 388 1266

Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID), 105 Gower Street, London WC1E 6AH; Telephone 071 387 8033

RSVP Newslines, CSV Retired and Senior Voluntary Programme,
237 Pentonville Road, London N1 9NJ

Trades Union Congress, Congress House, 23-28 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS

USEFUL DIRECTORIES

Whitaker's Almanack, available in libraries.

Voluntary Social Services, *A Directory of National Organisations*.

Telephone directories, available in libraries.